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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



"YOU HAVE PASSED YOUR SOLEMN PROMISE NOT TO REVEAL OUR MARRIAGE," SAID MR. UNDERWOOD, WITH A SNEER.

THE SEARCH FOR ALICE DESPARD.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

It was December, but not in the least the weather we are accustomed to associate with the last month in the year. The streets were wet and sloshy from long-continued rain; the sky all day had had the dull leaden hue once supposed to be peculiar to November; the atmosphere was best described by the unlovely adjective "muggy." Taken altogether, it was just as disagreeable an evening as you could possibly have found in which to take a journey, and yet a girl, in a dingy third-class carriage of a parliamentary train, was simply radiant with delight—because she was going home!

Elsie Desborough's home was not nearly as aristocratic as her name; it consisted of three small meanly-furnished rooms, within a walk of the Angel, Islington, which were rented by her father furnished, for the trifling sum of fifteen

shillings a week; not that fifteen shillings was at all a trifle to Claude Desborough, who was always desperately hard up.

The younger son of a needy off-shoot of a noble family, he had inherited nothing from his ancestors but good looks and expensive tastes; the first had been useful to him in his youth, and had been inherited by one of his children, not by the girl in the third-class carriage, for her face had little beauty save that given by two large wistful brown eyes and an ever-varying expression. No; Hilda was the beauty of the family, and Elsie the Cinderella; in proof of which, when things were extra bad with Mr. Desborough in the summer, it was Elsie he sent out into the world to earn her own living, and Hilda he kept to share his own fortunes.

Elsie Desborough was just nineteen. She had been, since September, junior teacher in a big middle-class school in the north of England, working very hard for a very scanty salary; but that day had sounded her release. For five blissful weeks she would be free of the sound of five-fingered exercises and elementary lessons; for five blissful weeks she might revel in her father's company and Hilda's affection; for the

little family loved each other dearly, in spite of pecuniary difficulties.

No wonder Elsie's face was wreathed in smiles at the joyful prospect. A young man, who had joined the train at Hitchin, and sat opposite her, thought he had never seen any creature look so intensely happy. Her dress was shabby, her jacket and hat had seen good service; poverty showed in every line of her attire; but yet she looked the essence of content; and Howard Glynn, who was particularly dissatisfied just then with his own lot, almost envied her.

Their fellow-passengers left them at Finsbury Park. For a few moments the young doctor and Elsie were alone. He made a pretext for speaking to her. He wanted to hear what kind of voice went with that joyous face.

"We are twenty minutes late," he observed, as he glanced at his watch. "I suppose, being so near Christmas, the regular traffic is upset."

"And we were due at seven!" said the girl, cheerfully. "I am glad I did not wait for the next train, which was two hours later than this!"

"It's a dreadful night," said Howard Glynn, who seemed bent on acting like a wet blanket;

"the rain was coming down in sheets when we were at Emsbury Park. I hope you have not far to go!"

"Oh, no. The tram will take me there in no time." Elsie had a frugal mind (wonderful for a Desborough); her box would follow from the station by carrier, and her small black bag she could easily take in her hand. "I live in Egerton-road!"

Dr. Glynn started.

"How very strange; I am going to Egerton-road!"

Elsie smiled.

"It's rather a dull street, but it's very handy; you can get down to Upper-street in no time!"

"I never was there in my life." Then, as though feeling some further explanation due, "A—friend of mine is lodging there for a short time, and I am going to see her."

"I think most people in Egerton-road do let lodgings," Elsie remarked, quietly; "it is so convenient."

Dr. Glynn would have liked to offer the lonely child a seat in his cab, but he was a gentleman to his finger-tips, and would not say anything that could make her think he had guessed her poverty.

He left her at King's Cross with a bow and "Good evening!" wondering just a little whether she would ever cross his path again.

Howard Glynn lived in London, and was junior partner to a doctor of some note.

His journey to Hitchin had been a painful one. He was summoned to the bedside of an aunt who was dangerously ill. She had brought him up, and in happier days he had hoped to marry her only child.

Meta had jilted him cruelly. With their wedding day fixed she had eloped; the companion of her flight his own special friend.

For years nothing was heard of them. To-day Mrs. Carter told Howard she had had a letter from Meta begging for help. The dying woman implored her nephew to forget his own wrongs and go to Meta's assistance. It was hardly strange Dr. Glynn felt inclined to look at the blackest side of things to-night. He had passed his word to his aunt to seek out his cousin as soon as he reached London; but he hated his errand.

The weather was just as bad as he had described it to Elsie; but cabs are plentiful at King's Cross, and he was soon driving off in the direction of the Egerton-road. No. 44 was a corner house, and the light of a street lamp showed the figures on the fanlight over the door, so that he had no doubt as to his destination.

A rather slatternly-looking woman declared Mrs. Carlyle was at home; and in a dingy front parlour he and his old love met again after nine long years.

Those years had changed the woman fast. Meta Carter had been a very pretty lively girl with a tendency to flirt, and a wonderful fund of merriment.

Mrs. Carlyle was pretty still; but her cheeks were thin, and her eyes hollow, while merriment and she had parted company for a long time. Two dull red spots burnt in her cheeks as she took Howard's hand. Howard looking older and graver, but handsomer than in the past days, and with a certain air of wellbeing about him which comes to those who are making their way in life.

"Have you come to reproach me," she asked, bitterly, "to mock at my misery?" "You know me better," he answered, gravely. "I am here at your mother's request. Your letter troubled her, and she wished me to come and see you."

"It is six months since I wrote," said Mrs. Carlyle, coldly, "she has been long in sending."

"Don't say one harsh word of her, Meta; she is dying."

"Dying!" There came a hungry greedy look into the woman's eyes not good to see. "She cannot take her money with her. Surely she will have mercy now!"

"She can do but little," said Dr. Glynn; "believing you lost to her she sank her money in an annuity, which will stop with her life. She has saved nothing. She parted with her furniture

some years ago, and has been living in lodgings since."

"Then there will be nothing for us; and we are at our last gasp. The children are in rage. I am in debt—even these miserable lodgings are beyond my means."

"But what is Carlyle doing? He used to be a popular teacher!"

"Geoffrey is dead," said Meta, without one sound of regret. "Do you suppose I should be in this plight if he were alive?"

"I beg your pardon; I did not understand. Hark! what is that?"

For the bell was pulled violently; and to his surprise he heard the voice of his late fellow-traveller.

"Good evening, Mrs. Meek! Where's Hilda? Where's my father? Why didn't they come to meet me?"

"Goodness!" said Mrs. Carlyle (the walls at 44, Egerton-road, were so thin every word spoken in the passage could be heard by Howard and his cousin), "that is Elsie Desborough. Surely those people haven't been brutes enough not to tell her."

"Not to tell her what?" inquired Dr. Glynn.

"That they left here days ago. The Desboroughs were my fellow-lodgers when I first came here; but they have fallen on evil times. First this girl Elsie went out as a teacher; then Mrs. Desborough got into fresh scrapes (it's a way people have in Egerton-road); and last week they decamped without even a word of warning. They owe Mrs. Meek pounds upon pounds."

And the landlady seemed to be venting her wrongs on the poor little new arrival.

Howard Glynn's blood boiled as he caught these words.

"As to where your father and sister are, Miss, that's just what I should like to know. I'd have the law on 'em pretty soon for cheating an honest widow. They just stole off last Thursday without a word to anyone, and owing me three pounds ten."

So Meta Carlyle had exaggerated the amount; but then she exaggerated most things.

The poor girl outside made the more attempt to soften the landlady's heart, her voice was so low and tear-laden that the cousins could not catch her words, but Mrs. Meek's reply was audible enough.

"Let you sleep here to-night, Miss? No! If I know it, you'd be serving me the same as you paid. You'd best go away quietly, or I'll send for a policeman to make you."

Howard Glynn forgot everything then except that a creature weaker and more helpless than himself was in trouble. He threw open the parlour door and joined the two in the passage.

"I can testify that Miss Desborough expected to find her sister here," he said, gravely. "It is getting late, past eight o'clock. Surely it cannot hurt you to allow the young lady to remain here till to-morrow. I am sure she would gladly pay you in advance for the night's lodging."

Poor little Elsie looked at him gratefully. How terribly changed she was in this short half hour; why, her eyes were full of tears and her hands trembled pitifully.

"Right's right," said Mrs. Meek, spitefully, "and I've suffered too much from them Desboroughs to trust any of them. And I don't know who you are, Sir, to interfere."

"I am Mrs. Carlyle's cousin," said Howard, sternly; "she, I believe, is also in your debt."

"Thirty-five shillings," said Mrs. Meek, whose head was a walking ledger; "but she's a widow like myself and so I'm not hard on her; she doesn't dress up in silks and satins, or wear gold chains like Miss Desborough did."

"Well," said Dr. Glynn, "I am here to settle my cousin's liabilities, then perhaps you will allow this young lady to remain for the night as her guest."

Meta Carlyle had appeared now; something in Elsie's forlorn, desolate air must have touched her heart, for she put one hand on the girl's shoulder and then turned round to face her landlady.

"She can sleep on the sofa in my parlour to-night, that can't hurt you, Mrs. Meek."

The widow gave in; Elsie, trembling from

head to foot, followed her friend in need to the front parlour, and Dr. Glynn sat down again in the vain hope of trying to find some consolation.

"I'll look in again to-morrow morning, Meta; I shall have a wire the first thing to say how your mother is."

Meta nodded carelessly. Her resentment against her mother was very heavy; she unfastened Elsie's jacket and drew her to the fire with no unkindly hand; perhaps to be playing the part of hostess once more brought back some long forgotten interest of her youth.

"Don't fret, dear," Glynn heard her say. "Depend upon it Miss Desborough wrote to you and gave you their new address."

"But what happened?" asked Elsie nervously. "I heard from Hilda a fortnight ago and she dropped no hint of their having to leave here."

Mrs. Carlyle shrugged her shoulders.

"I think your father put his name to a bill and did not meet it, anyhow, he went off very suddenly; there's no doubt at all it was just the want of money that made him leave."

"And Hilda is with him!"

"My dear, Hilda went two days before Mr. Desborough, and I don't believe they are together."

"Please tell me everything," pleaded Elsie, "it will be less painful than suspense."

"There's not much to tell—she was very pretty, you know."

"Show us beautiful," answered Elsie.

"And she had a lover," said Mrs. Carlyle. "Oh, I know the signs well enough, you need not ask me how I tell; Hilda Desborough had a lover, I saw them together once; he was a swell of the first order, I can tell you; if you want to know where your sister is you had better ask him."

"Hilda would never marry anyone without telling me," protested Elsie.

As for Dr. Glynn, he was silent from strong sympathy. He felt so keenly for the girl whose cup of joy had been changed so suddenly into mourning.

"You would have said yesterday she would never leave here without telling you," retorted Mrs. Carlyle, "but you see she has."

A curious flush dyed the girl's face.

"It's very kind of you to take me in," she said to Meta Carlyle; "but please, if you are going to say cruel things about Hilda, I'd rather not stay. I'd sooner beg a lodging anywhere than hear a word against her."

"You are a faithful little soul," said the widow good-temperedly; "there, I'll not say another word about her. Well, good-night, Howard," as he rose to go, "come and tell me the latest news of my mother to-morrow. Tell her if she wants to see me she must pay my railway fare, I've no money for travelling."

"She does not want to see you, Meta," said her cousin simply, and then he took his departure.

Left alone together in the flickering firelight the two women looked at each other; the tears were still wet on Elsie's cheek, and Mrs. Carlyle's eyes were not quite dry, her thoughts were busy with the past.

"Cheer up, child," she said, as she began to prepare a cup of tea, "I don't believe they can leave you long without news, and I tell you what, Elsie, I'll keep a look out for the letter and send it on to you myself."

"You are very kind. Mrs. Carlyle, did not Hilda say good-bye to you? she was so intimate with you before I went to Yorkshire."

"Plain speaking is best," said Meta frankly; "we were the best of friends till Hilda took up the notion I wanted to be her stepmother. There couldn't have been a greater mistake. My first marriage was a failure through poverty, and if I ever took a second husband it would be someone with a peck of money. However, there was no convincing Hilda, and that was our first difference; then when I saw her with this fine gentleman I was fool enough to give her a little advice; she never spoke to me again."

"But papa, he must have known where she was going!"

"I can't say—he came in to see me before he went, and told me he was glad you were safe in Yorkshire; Hilda, he said, could struggle better

against the world, but you were such a little Puritan, you fretted to death over every-bill. The idea he gave me then was that he had arranged for you to remain at school for the holidays."

"They would not have liked that—oh! Mrs. Carlyle, I was so happy. I had so looked forward to these few weeks at home."

"How old are you?"

"Just twenty."

"Ah, I was twenty when I left home! I've learnt since then never to look forward to anything at all; it's a hard lesson, but when it's once conquered it saves us pain."

Elsie looked at her sadly.

"I couldn't bear never to hope for anything. Life wouldn't be worth having."

"Life is not worth having," returned Meta Carlyle, "unless one is born rich."

Elsie started up suddenly with a strange determination in her face.

"I'll never rest till I find Hilda. I'll spend my life in hunting for her."

Mrs. Carlyle shook her head.

"You'd far better spend it in teaching little girls their A B C," said the other gravely, "you'd get more satisfaction out of it."

"I shall not go back to Yorkshire," said Elsie, "I mean to stay in London and look for Hilda."

"And such trifles as bread-and-butter, clothes and shelter!"

"I must get some work to do at home, you earn your living at home."

"And a pretty living it is; call it a starving rather," said Mrs. Carlyle savagely; "often and often if it hadn't been for the children I'd have ended everything in the river. Fate is cruelly hard, Elsie—you saw that man who came here to-night!"

"Your cousin?"

"Well, we were brought up together, and had all things in common. My mother gave him a home, and treated him as her own son! Now Howard is a rising physician, and I am just a machinist. He'll keep a brougham one of these days, and his wife—when he gets one—will live a lady's life of ease. Look at me—I tell you fate is hard."

In this case it was not fate, but Meta's own sin; but Elsie Desborough, of course, knew nothing of the past. She felt that Mrs. Carlyle was to be pitied, but she managed to pity her without in the least blaming Dr. Glyn.

It was late before poor Elsie fell asleep, but at last her eyes closed, and she fell into a deep untroubled slumber.

CHAPTER II.

To do Hilda Desborough justice, she had never intended to leave her little sister to arrive at 44, Egerton-road, unconscious that her family had quitted it. Hilda was selfish; all her life she had been used to be first in all domestic matters; if either sister had to be sacrificed it was always Elsie. Elsie, indeed, with her uncompromising ideas of right and truth, her terrible dread of shame and deceit, was just a little troublesome to the unscrupulous father and Hilda.

These two were adventurers to the core, and freed from the presence of the gentle girl who had been just a little restraint on them they plunged headlong into the reckless pursuit of money. Mr. Desborough speculated with the cash he received for his "little bill" and lost every farthing. Hilda speculated with something else—her beauty. It was all she had, and Mrs. Carlyle was right in thinking there was someone who admired it very much.

The Honourable Edgar Underwood met Miss Desborough at a somewhat fast music hall, and decided she was the loveliest girl he had ever seen. But the Honourable Edgar had rather more prudence than heart. He was willing to look over Hilda's want of fortune, but he was not willing to marry her father and sister; he wanted a wife, not a family of poor relations.

He put the case very plainly before his beautiful, imperious lady love. He would marry her at once, give her a share in his honours present and to come, but on this condition, that the

first months of their wedded life were spent abroad and that neither her father nor Elsie visited them on their return without a special invitation.

Hilda agreed; she firmly believed her own influence would bend Mr. Underwood to her will when once they were married, and as her father was contemplating a voyage to the Antipodes she had no scruple in—for a time—renouncing him. With Elsie the case was different. Elsie was a dear little thing, but she was neither pretty, clever, nor attractive; Edgar could not be expected to put up with such a relation; and in that case, as to her father.

Of course Elsie would be disappointed. Every one of her letters counted the days to the Christmas holidays; but then she was a sensible girl and would get over it; so Mrs. Underwood, the day after she took that title, indited a short note to her sister, which if not very considerate was eminently practical.

"DEAR LITTLE ELSIE,—"

"Father is in a great deal of trouble, and has gone to Australia till things get settled. As I could not live alone in Egerton-road, I am going abroad as travelling companion and start at once. I am so sorry there will be no home for you to come to next week. Won't Miss Ward keep you for the holidays if you look after the servants a little and do needlework? If not, there is an excellent home for governesses near Islington, which will take you in for fifteen shillings a week. Your salary would quite afford this. I will write again soon, but as we shall be travelling about from place to place, I can't tell you where to send letters, and for the same reason you must not expect many from me."

"I am your affectionate sister,"

"HILDA."

The Honourable Edgar came in as his wife was addressing this sisterly epistle, and offered to post it with his own letters. Perhaps he doubted Hilda's promise not to mention their marriage to any member of her family; perhaps he thought it wiser to cut the links which bound her to her sister, once and for all; any way, that letter to Elsie was never posted, and the fire in Mr. Underwood's private room at the Grand Hotel might have explained what became of it.

Elsie had wondered just a little that neither her father nor sister replied to the letter in which she told them she was coming home on December 17th, but then both Mr. and Miss Desborough were a little erratic in their ways, and never did just what they were expected to, and it was with out a single imagining that the poor little under-teacher started for London, and—as she thought—home.

Elsie awoke the morning after her arrival in Egerton-road with a strange sense of something having happened; she put her hand to her head, and tried to think. Bit by bit everything came back to her. Hilda was lost, her father had disappeared, she was deserted by her relations, and was quite alone in the world with just over five pounds in her pocket wherewith to support herself, till, on the 24th of January, she might return to her duties at Miss Ward's Academy for Young Ladies.

Meta Carlyle was not a heartless woman, but her own troubles had hardened her, and her conscience had never been a very sensitive one. As they sat at breakfast she put the case before Elsie very plainly.

"You'd better go to some cheap Governess' home till you can get back to your school. Don't you see that if you found your father and sister ever so they wouldn't be able to keep you! In Yorkshire you have got a livelihood, such as it is. Here you'd be one more among the hundreds of women who are working hard for starvation wages."

But Elsie stood her ground firmly.

"I don't expect papa and Hilda to keep me; but I can't give up the hope of finding them. I must try hard to get something to do which will leave me a little free time to look for them."

Dr. Glyn called about eleven. His partner had released him for the morning, knowing his aunt was in extremities, so his time was his own.

Elsie would have left the cousins alone, but Meta said quickly.

"Don't go, Miss Desborough. Howard and I have no secrets to discuss."

Howard Glyn was not quite sure he liked this. He had things to say to Meta he hardly cared to speak before this brown-eyed girl.

"Your mother is dead," he said very gently.

"She must have passed away directly I left her, for I had a letter from her sister-in-law this morning."

"Aunt Deb?" suggested Meta. "You don't mean to say she is still alive?"

"She is still alive and flourishing. Her son in America made a pile, and sends her home money regularly. In the letter, Meta, there is a very kind message to you. She seems aware of your husband's debts. She offers you and the children house room in her pretty cottage. She cannot afford to keep you entirely, but she thinks you would soon get enough music pupils to make both ends meet, living rent free and being among friends. She says the country air would be good for your little ones. In short, Meta, it rests with you to accept."

"It will be frightfully dull," said Mrs. Carlyle, with a little shrug of her shoulders. "I hate the country, and Aunt Deb was always as prim as if she had swallowed a poker; but I can't stand the life here. The work and privations are killing me by inches, so I suppose I may as well accept."

It was not a gracious speech, and it jarred on Howard painfully.

"I think Mrs. Carter's offer the kindest I ever heard," he said, a little coldly. "Few would do so much for a relation they had not seen for years."

"You wouldn't at any rate," said Mrs. Carlyle, bitterly. "You made that pain enough."

"I could not," said the young doctor, simply.

"I have no house to share with anyone. You forget that I am a lonely man, Meta."

"Well," said Mrs. Carlyle sharply, "I suppose I must go and vegetate with Aunt Deb, that is if Mrs. Meek will let me. I owe her a good bit."

"I will see to that," said Howard, speaking hurriedly, for the whole scene was painful to him; "and Meta, you must get some mourning. Everyone at Walden will know your mother is just dead. Will ten pounds be sufficient for that if I settle with Mrs. Meek?"

"I dare say I can make it do. Howard, you used to be great at influencing people, perhaps you'll try your hand on Miss Desborough. I've done my best and failed. I want her to go back to Yorkshire, but she says she must stay here to look for her sister."

Howard turned to Elsie. How terribly sad she looked. How altered from the joyous little creature he had seen in the train.

"I am quite sure you ought not to stay here," he said, kindly; "the landlady evidently bears your family a grudge, and might be quite abusive if you were left alone at her mercy."

"I can't bear to go to a home for governesses," said the girl, drearily; "it would cost nearly all I have, and besides, I don't mean to go back to Yorkshire even after the holidays. I want to stay in London and look for Hilda."

Howard hesitated.

"You are very young to do that."

"I should just eat my heart out if I went back to Miss Ward's," she said, sadly. "You see the doubt as to what had befallen my sister would make me so wretched I couldn't give my mind to teaching."

"I shall go to Walden to-morrow," interrupted Mrs. Carlyle, "and I don't think Miss Desborough would be comfortable here after I have left."

"Haven't you any friends in London, Miss Desborough?" asked Dr. Glyn.

"I have one friend, but I don't know where she is. Our old nurse married and set up a lodging-house at Baywater, but I haven't heard from her for a long time; she was talking of moving to the country, as her husband, Mr. Lovemore, was ailing."

Dr. Glyn's face lighted up.

"I have a patient called Lovemore, and it is

"the rain was coming down in sheets when we were at Finsbury Park. I hope you have not far to go!"

"Oh, no. The tram will take me there in no time." Elsie had a frugal mind (wonderful for a Desborough); her box would follow from the station by carrier, and her small black bag she could easily take in her hand. "I live in Egerton-road!"

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"Then there will be nothing for us; and we are at our last gasp. The children are in rags. I am in debt—even these miserable lodgings are beyond my means."

"But what is Carlyle doing? He used to be a popular teacher!"

"Godfrey is dead," said Meta, without one sound of regret. "Do you suppose I should be in this plight if he were alive?"

"I beg your pardon; I did not understand. Hark! what is that?"

For the bell was pulled violently; and to his surprise he heard the voice of his late fellow-traveller.

"Good evening, Mrs. Meek! Where's Hilda? Where's my father? Why didn't they come to meet me?"

"Goodness!" said Mrs. Carlyle (the walls at 44, Egerton-road, were so thin every word spoken in the passage could be heard by Howard and his cousin), "that is Elsie Desborough. Surely those people haven't been brutes enough 'not to tell her.'"

"Not to tell her what?" inquired Dr. Glynn.

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The poor girl outside made one more attempt to soften the landlady's heart, her voice was so low and tear-laden that the cousins could not catch her words, but Mrs. Meek's reply was audible enough.

"Let you sleep here to-night, Miss? Not if I know it, you'd be serving me the same as you did. You'd best go away quietly, or I'll send for a policeman to make you."

Howard Glynn forgot everything then except that a creature weaker and more helpless than himself was in trouble. He threw open the parlour door and joined the two in the passage.

"I can testify that Miss Desborough expected to find her sister here," he said, gravely. "It is getting late, past eight o'clock. Surely it cannot hurt you to allow the young lady to remain here till to-morrow. I am sure she would gladly pay you in advance for the night's lodging."

Poor little Elsie looked at him gratefully. How terribly changed she was in this short half hour; why, her eyes were full of tears and her hands trembled pitifully.

"Right's right," said Mrs. Meek, spitefully, "and I've suffered too much from them Desboroughs to trust any of them. And I don't know who you are, Sir, to interfere."

"I am Mrs. Carlyle's cousin," said Howard, sternly; "she, I believe, is also in your debt."

"Thirty-five shillings," said Mrs. Meek, whose head was a walking ledger; "but she's a widow like myself and so I'm not hard on her; she doesn't dress up in silks and satins, or wear gold chains like Miss Desborough did."

"Well," said Dr. Glynn, "I am here to settle my cousin's liabilities, then perhaps you will allow this young lady to remain for the night as her guest."

Meta Carlyle had appeared now; something in Elsie's forlorn, desolate air must have touched her heart, for she put one hand on the girl's shoulder and then turned round to face her landlady.

"She can sleep on the sofa in my parlour to-night, that can't hurt you, Mrs. Meek."

The widow gave in; Elsie, trembling from

head to foot, followed her friend in need to the front parlour, and Dr. Glynn sat down again in the vain hope of trying to find some consolation. "I'll look in again to-morrow morning, Meta; I shall have a wire the first thing to say how your mother is."

Meta nodded carelessly. Her resentment against her mother was very heavy; she unfastened Elsie's jacket and drew her to the fire with no unkindly hand; perhaps to be playing the part of hostess once more brought back some long forgotten interest of her youth.

"Don't fret, dear," Glynn heard her say. "Depend upon it Miss Desborough wrote to you and gave you their new address."

"But what happened?" asked Elsie nervously. "I heard from Hilda a fortnight ago and she dropped no hint of their having to leave here."

Mrs. Carlyle shrugged her shoulders.

"I think your father put his name to a bill and did not meet it, anyhow, he went off very suddenly; there's no doubt at all it was just the want of money that made him leave."

"And Hilda is with him!"

"My dear, Hilda went two days before Mr. Desborough, and I don't believe they are together."

"Please tell me everything," pleaded Elsie, "it will be less painful than suspense."

"There's not much to tell—she was very pretty, you know."

"She was beautiful," answered Elsie.

"And she had a lover," said Mrs. Carlyle. "Oh I know the signs well enough, you need not ask me how I tell; Hilda Desborough had a lover, I saw them together once; he was a swell of the first order, I can tell you; if you want to know where your sister is you had better ask him."

"Hilda would never marry anyone without telling me," protested Elsie.

As for Dr. Glynn, he was silent from strong sympathy. He felt so kindly for the girl whose cup of joy had been changed so suddenly into mourning.

"You would have said yesterday she would never leave home without telling you," retorted Mrs. Carlyle, "but you see she has."

A curious flush dyed the girl's face.

"It's very kind of you to take me in," she said to Meta Carlyle; "but please, if you are going to say cruel things about Hilda, I'd rather not stay. I'd sooner beg a lodging anywhere than hear a word against her."

"You are a faithful little soul," said the widow good-temperedly; "there, I'll not say another word about her. Well, good-night, Howard," as he rose to go, "come and tell me the latest news of my mother to-morrow. Tell her if she wants to see me she must pay my railway fare, I've no money for travelling."

"She does not want to see you, Meta," said her cousin simply, and then he took his departure.

Left alone together in the flickering firelight the two women looked at each other; the tears were still wet on Elsie's cheek, and Mrs. Carlyle's eyes were not quite dry, her thoughts were busy with the past.

"Cheer up, child," she said, as she began to prepare a cup of tea, "I don't believe they can leave you long without news, and I tell you what, Elsie, I'll keep a look out for the letter and send it on to you myself."

"You are very kind. Mrs. Carlyle, did not Hilda say good-bye to you? I was so intimate with you before I went to Yorkshire."

"Plain speaking is best," said Meta frankly; "we were the best of friends till Hilda took up the notion I wanted to be her stepmother. There couldn't have been a greater mistake. My first marriage was a failure through poverty, and if I ever took a second husband it would be someone with a peck of money. However, there was no convincing Hilda, and that was our first difference; then when I saw her with this fine gentleman I was fool enough to give her a little advice; she never spoke to me again."

"But papa, he must have known where she was going!"

"I can't say—he came in to see me before he went, and told me he was glad you were safe in Yorkshire; Hilda, he said, could struggle better

against the world, but you were such a little Puritan, you fretted to death over every bill. The idea he gave me then was that he had arranged for you to remain at school for the holidays."

"They would not have liked that—oh! Mrs. Carlyle, I was so happy. I had so looked forward to these five weeks at home."

"How old are you?"

"Just twenty."

"Ah, I was twenty when I left home! I've learnt since then never to look forward to anything at all; it's a hard lesson, but when it's once conquered it saves us pain."

Elsie looked at her sadly.

"I couldn't bear never to hope for anything, life wouldn't be worth having."

"Life is not worth having," returned Meta Carlyle, "unless one is born rich."

Elsie started up suddenly with a strange determination in her face.

"I'll never rest till I find Hilda, I'll spend my life in hunting for her."

Mrs. Carlyle shook her head.

"You'd far better spend it in teaching little girls their A B C," said the other gravely, "you'd get more satisfaction out of it."

"I shall not go back to Yorkshire," said Elsie, "I mean to stay in London and look for Hilda."

"And such trifles as bread-and-butter, clothes and shelter!"

"I must get some work to do at home, you earn your living at home."

"And a pretty living it is; call it a starving rather," said Mrs. Carlyle savagely; "often and often if it hadn't been for the children I'd have ended everything in the river. Fate is cruelly hard, Elsie—you saw that man who came here to-night?"

"Your cousin?"

"Well, we were brought up together, and had all things in common. My mother gave him a home, and treated him as her own son. Now Howard is a rising physician, and I am just a machinist. He'll keep a brougham one of these days, and his wife—when he gets one—will live a lady's life of ease. Look at me—I tell you fate is hard."

In this case it was not fate, but Meta's own sin; but Elsie Desborough, of course, knew nothing of the past. She felt that Mrs. Carlyle was to be pitied, but she managed to pity her without in the least blaming Dr. Glyn.

It was late before poor Elsie fell asleep, but at last her eyes closed, and she fell into a deep untroubled slumber.

CHAPTER II.

To do Hilda Desborough justice, she had never intended to leave her little sister to arrive at 44, Egerton-road, unconscious that her family had quitted it. Hilda was selfish; all her life she had been used to be first in all domestic matters; if either sister had to be sacrificed it was always Elsie. Elsie, indeed, with her uncompromising ideas of right and truth, her terrible dread of shame and deceit, was just a little troublesome to the unscrupulous father and Hilda.

These two were adventurers to the core, and freed from the presence of the gentle girl who had been just a little restraint on them they plunged headlong into the reckless pursuit of money. Mr. Desborough speculated with the cash he received for his "little bill" and lost every farthing. Hilda speculated with something else—her beauty. It was all she had, and Mrs. Carlyle was right in thinking there was someone who admired it very much.

The Honourable Edgar Underwood met Miss Desborough at a somewhat fast music-hall, and decided she was the loveliest girl he had ever seen. But the Honourable Edgar had rather more prudence than heart. He was willing to look over Hilda's want of fortune, but he was not willing to marry her father and sister; he wanted a wife, not a family of poor relations.

He put the case very plainly before his beautiful, imperious lady love. He would marry her at once, give her a share in his honours present and to come, but on this condition, that the

first months of their wedded life were spent abroad and that neither her father nor Elsie visited them on their return without a special invitation.

Hilda agreed; she firmly believed her own influence would bend Mr. Underwood to her will when once they were married, and as her father was contemplating a voyage to the Antipodes she had no scruple in—for a time—renouncing him. With Elsie the case was different. Elsie was a dear little thing, but she was neither pretty, clever, nor attractive; Edgar could not be expected to put up with such a relation.

Of course Elsie would be disappointed. Every one of her letters counted the days to the Christmas holidays, but then she was a sensible girl and would get over it; so Mrs. Underwood, the day after she took that little, indited a short note to her sister, which if not very considerate was eminently practical.

"DEAR LITTLE ELSIE,"

"Father is in a great deal of trouble, and has gone to Australia till things get settled. As I could not live alone in Egerton-road, I am going abroad as travelling companion and start at once. I am so sorry there will be no home for you to come to next week. Won't Miss Ward keep you for the holidays if you look after the servants a little and do needlework? If not, there is an excellent home for governesses near Islington, which will take you in for fifteen shillings a week. Your salary would quite afford this. I will write again soon, but as we shall be travelling about from place to place, I can't tell you where to send letters, and for the same reason you must not expect many from me."

"I am your affectionate sister,

"HILDA."

The Honourable Edgar came in as his wife was addressing this sisterly epistle, and offered to post it with his own letters. Perhaps he doubted Hilda's promise not to mention their marriage to any member of her family; perhaps he thought it wiser to cut the links which bound her to her sister, once and for all; any way, that letter to Elsie was never posted, and the fire in Mr. Underwood's private room at the Grand Hotel might have explained what became of it.

Elsie had wondered just a little that neither her father nor sister replied to the letter in which she told them she was coming home on December 17th, but then both Mr. and Miss Desborough were a little erratic in their ways, and never did just what they were expected to, and it was with out a single misgiving that the poor little under-teacher started for London, and—as she thought—home.

Elsie awoke the morning after her arrival in Egerton-road with a strange sense of something having happened; she put her hand to her head, and tried to think. Baby hit everything came back to her. Hilda was lost, her father had disappeared, she was deserted by her relations, and was quite alone in the world with just over five pounds in her pocket wherewith to support herself, till, on the 24th of January, she might return to her duties at Miss Ward's Academy for Young Ladies.

Meta Carlyle was not a heartless woman, but her own troubles had hardened her, and her conscience had never been a very sensitive one. As they sat at breakfast she put the case before Elsie very plainly.

"You'd better go to some cheap Governesses' home till you can get back to your school. Don't you see that if you found your father and sister over so they wouldn't be able to keep you? In Yorkshire you have got a livelihood, such as it is. Here you'd be one more among the hundreds of women who are working hard for starvation wages."

But Elsie stood her ground firmly.

"I don't expect papa and Hilda to keep me; but I can't give up the hope of finding them. I must try hard to get something to do which will leave me a little free time to look for them."

Dr. Glyn called about eleven. His partner had released him for the morning, knowing his aunt was in extremities, so his time was his own.

Elsie would have left the cousins alone, but Meta said quickly.

"Don't go, Miss Desborough. Howard and I have no secrets to discuss."

Howard Glyn was not quite sure he liked this. He had things to say to Meta he hardly cared to speak before this brown-eyed girl.

"Your mother is dead," he said very gently.

"She must have passed away directly I left her, for I had a letter from her sister-in-law this morning."

"Aunt Deb?" suggested Meta. "You don't mean to say she is still alive?"

"She is still alive and flourishing. Her son in America made a pile, and sends her home money regularly. In the letter, Meta, there is a very kind message to you. She seems aware of your husband's death. She offers you and the children house room in her pretty cottage. She cannot afford to keep you entirely, but she thinks you would soon get enough music pupils to make both ends meet, living rent free and being among friends. She says the country air would be good for your little ones. In short, Meta, it rests with you to accept."

"It will be frightfully dull," said Mrs. Carlyle, with a little shrug of her shoulders. "I hate the country, and Aunt Deb was always as prim as if she had swallowed a poker; but I can't stand the life here. The work and privations are killing me by inches, so I suppose I may as well accept."

It was not a gracious speech, and it jarred on Howard painfully.

"I think Mrs. Carter's offer the kindest I ever heard," he said, a little coldly. "Few would do so much for a relation they had not seen for years."

"You wouldn't at any rate," said Mrs. Carlyle, bitterly. "You made that plain enough."

"I could not," said the young doctor, simply. "I have no house to share with anyone. You forget that I am a lonely man, Meta."

"Well," said Mrs. Carlyle sharply, "I suppose I must go and vegetate with Aunt Deb, that is if Mrs. Meek will let me. I owe her a good bit."

"I will see to that," said Howard, speaking hurriedly, for the whole scene was painful to him; and Meta, you must get some mourning. Everyone at Walden will know your mother is just dead. Will ten pounds be sufficient for that if I settle with Mrs. Meek?"

"I daresay I can make it do. Howard, you used to be great at influencing people, perhaps you'll try your hand on Miss Desborough. I've done my best and failed. I want her to go back to Yorkshire, but she says she must stay here to look for her sister."

Howard turned to Elsie. How terribly sad she looked. How altered from the joyous little creature he had seen in the train.

"I am quite sure you ought not to stay here," he said, kindly; "the landlady evidently bears your family a grudge, and might be quite abusive if you were left alone at her mercy."

"I can't bear to go to a home for governesses," said the girl, drearily; "it would cost nearly all I have, and besides, I don't mean to go back to Yorkshire even after the holidays. I want to stay in London and look for Hilda."

Howard hesitated.

"You are very young to do that."

"I should just eat my heart out if I went back to Miss Ward's," she said, sadly. "You see the doubt as to what had befallen my sister would make me so wretched. I couldn't give my mind to teaching."

"I shall go to Walden to-morrow," interrupted Mrs. Carlyle, "and I don't think Elsie Desborough would be comfortable here after I have left."

"Haven't you any friends in London, Miss Desborough?" asked Dr. Glyn.

"I have one friend, but I don't know where she is. Our old nurse married and set up a lodging-house at Bayswater, but I haven't heard from her for a long time; she was talking of moving to the country, as her husband, Mr. Lovemore, was ailing."

Dr. Glyn's face lighted up.

"I have a patient called Lovemore, and it is

not at all a common name. My Mrs. Lovemore lives at Baywater, and is a widow. Her Christian name is Caroline."

"Yes, we used to call her Carrie, it must be the same."

"I should say so. Well, Miss Desborough, she is pretty comfortably off, and takes one or two lodgers, more for occupation than actual need. I'll go round to her to-day and tell her you want her to take you in. You'll be far happier with her than in common apartments, or any cheap 'home,' and I don't expect you'll quarrel about terms. She struck me as a very sensible woman, and I'll warrant she would know more about looking for your sister than you do."

The tears stole down Elsie's cheeks.

"I can never thank you enough, Dr. Glynn, you have made me feel quite hopeful."

"It's a doctor's province to be useful," he said cheerfully, wishing there was not such a sneer on Meta's face, "and Mrs. Lovemore is a special ally of mine."

Which was true. A good many years before, when Howard Glynn was not so prosperous, or well-known, he had attended Mr. Lovemore in a long illness, and grown fairly acquainted with the worthy couple. Not long after the husband's death Howard Glynn himself was stricken down with fever, and Mrs. Lovemore hearing of it had insisted on nursing him herself, doing so so skilfully that probably he owed his life to her devotion. After that a strange kind of intimacy had sprung up between the young physician and the comely middle-aged widow.

Howard gratified her by sometimes dropping in to taste her tea and muffins, while Mrs. Lovemore "swore by" her favourite doctor, and extolled his skill to all her gossip.

Howard Glynn had a busy afternoon, and it was not till late in the evening that he could find his way to Westmoreland Road. The "girl" opened the door and ushered him into the front parlour, where Mrs. Lovemore and her tabby cat were keeping each other company over the fire.

"Good gracious, Dr. Glynn, who'd have thought of your calling so late, but I'm main pleased to see you."

"I've come on business," said Howard, smiling, "and I must begin by asking you a question. Did you ever know anyone of the name of Desborough?"

"Did I ever hear the name of Satan!" exclaimed the comely widow. "I did know a Mr. Desborough, sir, and he was pretty near as bad as Satan, not that he did anything the law would take knowledge of. He only lured my young mistress away from her home, and broke her heart one year after their marriage by his cruelty and neglect."

"It can't be the same," said Glynn, disappointed. "I promised a young lady called Desborough to find out if you were her old nurse, but she has a sister three years older than her self, and so—"

"It's the same," said Mrs. Lovemore promptly; "bless you, sir, he was a widower when he married Miss Lucy, though he took good care not to tell her till afterwards there was a child, a nasty spoilt creature, with bold black eyes, as aggravating as her pa."

In a very few words Howard Glynn told Mrs. Lovemore the story of Elsie Desborough as far as he knew it. The kind-hearted widow listened with tearful ears.

"Though I'd never been aught but a lady's maid, I slaved away as 'general' rather than leave Miss Lucy's child; but when the little girl was about ten her father's ways grew more and more disgraceful; and, at last, stand it I couldn't, and so I married Lovemore, who'd been courting me patiently for years. But I wrote often to Miss Elsie at first, till my letters came back marked 'Gone away, no address left,' and then I gave it up. As you know, sir, poor Lovemore's illness began about then, and what with one thing and another I'd well-nigh given up the hope of ever seeing my little girl again."

"Then you are willing to have her? You can't think how I have dreaded the thought of that child alone in London."

"I'm more than willing," said Mrs. Lovemore,

almost indignantly. "I'd share my last crust with Miss Lucy's child! but I'm thankful that other girl isn't tacked on to her. I'd have put up with Hilda Desborough for her sister's sake, but I never could abide her, and that's the truth!"

"It is a pity, for Elsie's one object seems to be to find her."

Mrs. Lovemore gave a prodigious sniff.

"People don't always get their one object, sir. Depend upon it, Hilda Desborough won't be found, unless it suits her. She's just given Miss Elsie the slip because she thought she'd get on better by herself, and fauced the poor little thing was in her way."

"Shall I write to Miss Elsie Desborough, or will you, Mrs. Lovemore?" asked Dr. Glynn. "I think it will be a relief to her to be assured of your welcome."

"I'll go round to Egerton-road the first thing to-morrow morning, sir, and that'll be better than any letters."

Remembering that Mrs. Meek had seemed strangely unlike her name, Howard Glynn was thankful to hear of this resolution; he did not like to think of poor little Elsie abused and reviled by the rough-looking landlady of No. 44, Egerton-road.

"It's nothing to me, of course," he reflected, as he went to bed that night. "I have little reason to believe in women, and shall probably never set eyes on this one again; but, all the same, I'm glad to think that poor little girl won't be quite alone in London."

CHAPTER III.

NOT very far from Mrs. Lovemore's modest house, somewhere near Lancaster-gate, stood a tall, imposing-looking mansion, known to the initiated as the home of Sir James and Lady Pelham, a wealthy, childless couple, devoted to each other, who seemed blessed with every earthly good except an heir to their name and fortune.

It was doubly hard because there was so much to inherit. In Sir James's case it mattered less; the Baronetcy had been bestowed on him late in life for distinguished service in India; he was fifty before he received the handle to his name, and knew pretty well when he gained his title he should be the first and last of his family to bear it. His large personal property was entirely at his own disposal, and would be bequeathed to his wife, who was many years his junior. It was that wife who grieved most for their childless state.

Emily Pelham was the only surviving child of the late Lord Underwood. Her father's title had gone to his younger brother; but Castle Underwood and its broad acres, its revenue of five thousand a-year, its jewels, plate, and family heirlooms had all come to Sir James's wife, and would have been the heritage of her children. Alas! now all must eventually return to the reigning Lord Underwood, a man who had nearly ruined himself on the turf, and whose debts would make a pretty hole even in such a fortune; while his son, a fast, rather dissipated young man, showed every sign of following in his father's steps.

Sir James sat in his own study consulting with that rising young physician, Howard Glynn, M.D.; they were discussing the state of Lady Pelham, which caused her husband the gravest anxiety.

"I can only tell you again," Howard Glynn said, simply, "that your wife's ailment is on the mind not the body; she seems to me to be fading out of life simply because she has no desire to stay in it; can't you possibly rouse her, or give her fresh interests. She seems to me to have no trouble to speak of."

"She has never got over the baby's death, twenty-four years ago."

"But she hasn't been in this state for twenty-four years!" said Howard, practically.

"No; but things have happened lately which make the child's loss more grievously felt. You have, perhaps, heard she was an Underwood?"

"Lord Underwood's heiress," said the young

doctor, with a smile. "Everyone knows that; I believe the present peer is Lady Pelham's uncle."

"Yes; and he's a scoundrel, though, perhaps, I'm not the right person to say it; his son is as bad. It is the thought that Castle Underwood, and the estate she so dearly loves, must one day pass to this 'worthy pair,' which troubles my poor wife and preys on her mind."

"Is that all?"

"It is a pretty good big all," said Sir James. "I know it has wrecked my poor wife's peace."

"How old is Lady Pelham?"

"Forty-six."

"And the Peerage gives her uncle sixty. His son must be turned thirty."

"Thirty-two."

"Well," said Howard, with his hearty smile, "humanly speaking the cure for your trouble rests with Lady Pelham herself. She has led a quiet regular life, possesses a splendid constitution, and if she shook off this apathy and melancholy might, barring accident, live to be eighty. It's public talk that Lord Underwood has one foot in the grave, and from what I know of the Honourable Edgar, he'll never make old bones."

Sir James was a little cheered, and after the young physician had departed imparted his opinion to his wife.

She was a beautiful woman still, though the silver threads had begun to come in her dark hair. She listened to her husband with a sad, anxious face, and before he had finished burst into tears.

"It will be my fault, Jim, and mine alone, if Uncle Ned and his son come in for Castle Underwood."

"My dear girl," exclaimed the Baronet, much perplexed, "what can you mean?"

"I mean," said Lady Pelham, bitterly, "that years ago I was asked to undertake the charge of the true heiress of the Underwoods, and I refused."

"My dear Emily, surely your mind is wandering."

She shook her head.

"Do you remember my sister Lucy?"

"Of course I do. She was one of your bridesmaids—a pretty little creature of thirteen or thereabouts. She died while we were in India, the year you spent at home, if I remember."

"Yes, but you never heard the whole story. My father and mother kept it back for the sake of the family honour. They met a very fascinating stranger one summer when they were travelling abroad, and Lucy eloped with him. My parents gave out that they had left her at school in Paris. They even told me so when I returned to England and asked for my little sister."

"Don't tell me," cried Sir James, "that poor girl has been living in poverty all these years!"

"No; she died at the very time her death was announced to the world. She had never made any attempt to soften my parents' hearts; she seemed to accept their decision as final; but when I had been about six months at home I received a letter in Lucy's hand. I never showed it to a living creature; I never even spoke of it till now."

"And was it to ask your help?"

"It was to tell me she was dying, and to implore me to take her week-old baby and bring it up as my own. She thought, she wrote, the little one might in some measure comfort me for my darling's loss. Jim, you will be shocked at me; but I was angry at the bare idea any other child could fill my boy's place. I never answered Lucy's letter. It was only through a faithful servant, who had followed my sister's fortunes, we heard two days later that she was dead."

Sir James started.

"But surely Lord and Lady Underwood offered to care for their grandchild!"

"I don't believe they had ever heard of her existence. Both my brothers were living then—one married, the other engaged—there seemed not the slightest chance that Lucy's little girl could ever become of any importance to the family."

"And now she is its heiress!"

Lady Pelham shuddered.

"I can't think which is worse. To let Uncle Ned, and Edgar after him, make ducks and drakes

of the estate, or to know that a girl, who has been brought up in abject poverty, and probably is not even as ladylike as my own maid, is reigning at Castle Underwood."

But the soldier had a clearer judgment than his wife.

"Emily, dear," he said, taking her thin hand in his, "I don't blame you. I seem to know just how you felt; but, my dear wife, right is right, and your niece must be discovered, and her claims as your heiress admitted. Happily, we are rich enough not to feel the loss of the money spent on the search. We need not have her to live with us if you dislike the idea; but we can at least provide for her so that she may grow used to her position."

"She would be twenty," said Lady Pelham, with a shudder, "and poor people marry disgracefully young, and she may be the wife of a linen-draper's assistant or a city clerk. Jim, I think after all I'd rather hold my tongue. Uncle Ned and Edgar are at least gentlemen by manner. I could not bear to see a counter-jumper lordling it at Underwood."

"You won't see it dear," said her husband, gently. "Nothing can harm Underwood in your lifetime, and Emily, for Lucy's sake, the truth must be published."

She made no more protest.

"Let us find the girl first. She might be dead or a thousand things. We need not bring Uncle Ned and Edgar down on us with reproaches till we are quite sure of their misfortune."

"I will agree to that. But, Emily, why was it your brother-in-law never tried to get something out of us all these years. If he is such an adventurer I wonder he did not trade on his child's rights."

"While my brothers lived she had no rights. I don't suppose a man of that sort troubles much to read the Peerage; he may think the present Lord Underwood is one of Lucy's brothers."

"You have not told me his name."

"Despard. It has a French sound, and I know at first my father thought he was a Frenchman; but he was really of English birth. I believe he had been well-connected till he got into evil ways and came down in the world."

"What was he—by profession?"

"A Jack of all trades. An artist, musician and gambler, a regular Bohemian."

"Your sister did not tell you the baby's name I suppose."

"Alice—after our mother."

"Well," and Sir James looked intensely thankful even for that much, "at least, my dear Emily, there are no secrets between us now, and I believe, wife, that when this poor girl is discovered you will give her a loving welcome for your sister's sake. Why, Lucy's child could not be anything but a lady."

"Lucy died before she was ten days old," objected Lady Pelham. "Jim," entreatingly, "you won't tell anyone we know!"

"I will tell no one in the world, Emily, except Mr. Isaac, he's one of the first detectives of the day, and I mean to entrust the quest to him."

So the two quests were started very much at the same time, that of Elsie Desborough for her sister Hilda, and that of the Pelhams for their niece, Alice Despard; but, strange to say, neither met with any measure of success.

Elsie was delighted at the meeting with her old nurse, but she would only come to Westmoreland-road on two conditions, that Mrs. Lovemore would accept a modest contribution towards her board, and that she should be free to seek her sister.

"Half-sister," corrected the widow. "You had different mothers, which perhaps accounts for the contrast between you. I'll take five shillings a week, Miss Elsie, if you downright insist on it, though you'd be welcome to the best in my house for love. As for the rest, you shall look for Miss Desborough as much as you please, but I doubt your finding her."

And when Christmas was turned Elsie began to doubt it too. She had seen every one of Hilda's acquaintances whom she knew by name, but none of them could help her. Their story was much the same as Mrs. Carlyle's. Miss Desborough had a lover, a very grand, supercilious-

looking young man, who thought himself too good for anyone. She had been seen with him pretty frequently, he had even escorted her home to Egerton-road on an evening. From the day of her departure no one had set eyes on him, therefore the presumption was they were together.

"Hilda was just the sort of girl to throw her family over for a rich husband," one old lady told Elsie. "My dear, don't you fret. To my mind she's not worth grieving over, she treated you shamefully."

Mrs. Lovemore had tact enough not to mention the missing girl, but Elsie knew perfectly what her sentiments were, and perhaps this depressed her yet more when she said sadly one night early in January—

"Goody, to-morrow fortnight my holidays will be over. I'm glad now I didn't write and tell Miss Ward I couldn't come back to her, for you see I've heard nothing of Hilda."

Mrs. Lovemore put down her spectacles.

"You mustn't go back to that school in Yorkshire, Hooley. They work the very flesh off your bones, and well-nigh starve you, and all for twenty pounds a year. No, no, Miss Elsie, dear, you'll get something better than that if you're patient, and I'm only too pleased to have you here while you look out. I was thinking only last night if you took a daily engagement you might live here and let me look after you."

"I should be a dead loss to you, Goody. Miss Ward always said she would never have engaged me if she had seen me first. Depend upon it, Goody, no one in London will have anything to do with me."

Goody's answer was to produce pen, ink, and paper.

"Just write a line to the lady in Yorkshire, dear, to say that your friends think you're not strong enough to go through the winter there. And it's quite true, Miss Elsie, you're a sight thinner than I like, and Yorkshire's main cold in winter."

"Don't you know, Goody, I may be on your hands for months! It's easier to join the ranks of the unemployed than to leave them, I can tell you."

"Lovemore was a warm man, Miss Elsie. I've got this house and a nice little annuity his property was sunk in getting for me. I can't leave you a fortune, my dear, but I can give you a home if you'll only take it, and be only too pleased to have you here."

Elsie wrote her letter. She might despair of finding Hilda, but she felt somehow nearer the lost girl in London than anywhere else, and she dreaded the thought of returning to her bleak, dreary schoolroom in Yorkshire.

"Goody," as she called Mrs. Lovemore, had been the only mother she had ever known in her childhood, and it was almost like a return of the old childish days to be with her.

When she came home from posting her letter and an errand in Westbourne-grove, Elsie was a little surprised to find Mrs. Lovemore had a visitor. The colour deepened on her cheeks as Dr. Glynn took her hand and gravely wished her a happy new year.

"I am rather late with my good wishes, but I have been very busy lately," he said, pleasantly. "Mrs. Lovemore has invited me to tea. She and I are old friends, Miss Desborough."

Elsie departed to take off her coat and hat.

Howard turned to the widow with a grave gesture of assent as she left the room.

"Yes; she does look thin; do you suppose she is fretting after her sister?"

"It's not that," said Mrs. Lovemore. "She misses her sister because she is foolish enough to be fond of her, but I think she frets more because she feels she's alone in the world. I shall do my best for her, Dr. Glynn, but I'm not a lady—I'm nothing but her mother's maid, and Miss Elsie ought to have very different society to mine."

"She is not going back to Yorkshire?"

"To teach the children of butchers and bakers and candlestick makers! No, indeed! She may as well stay here as that. I think she'd be happier if she had a situation for a few hours

daily. I wanted to ask you, Dr. Glynn, if you knew of one?"

"I'm afraid my patients don't consult me about their children's teachers."

"Ah, but Miss Elsie can do more than teach. I'll get her to sing, presently, and you'll hear for yourself. She'd be just a treasure to some lady who had no children of her own and wanted someone to sing to her, or read to her, as a daughter might do."

Now Howard Glynn had come to Mrs. Lovemore's straight from Lancaster-gate, and Sir James Pelham's last words had been—

"We are looking out for a companion for my wife, not resident—we couldn't stand any one in the house—but some bright young girl who would come in and sit with her while I am at the club."

And the young doctor thought Elsie would be just the person to suit.

"I know someone who wants just that," he told Mrs. Lovemore. "She is one of the nicest persons I know—Lady Pelham."

Mrs. Lovemore poked the fire before she answered.

"Pelham's a good name; there was a Sir James Pelham made a baronet for something, in India."

"That's the man; he's hard on seventy now, but his wife is not much over forty—a charming woman."

"What's been the matter with her?" demanded Caroline. "I shouldn't like my young lady to catch anything."

"Lady Pelham's disorder is not infectious, she suffers from want of tone, low spirits, and so on."

"Miss Elsie, my dear," said Mrs. Lovemore, presently, "Dr. Glynn knows of just the situation to suit you, not far from here too."

"It sounds too good to be true," said Elsie, when she had heard the particulars, "but I'm afraid Lady Pelham would never have me. The junior teacher of a Yorkshire academy would not be grand enough."

"I hope you will go and see," said Howard, after he had listened to her singing; "Lady Pelham is passionately fond of music. A gift for it is almost an inheritance in the family, and until rheumatism crippled her fingers she herself was no mean performer."

Mrs. Lovemore was eminently business-like, and she suggested Glynn should write a note of introduction for Miss Elsie to present to Lady Pelham.

"A note from Glynn," exclaimed Sir James, when it was brought in the next morning, "why, he was here yesterday, what has he got to write about, Emily?"

"You can read it, Jim; I suppose I must see the girl, but I am sure I shall not like her, I particularly dislike gentlemen's protégées."

The note was very brief:

"DEAR LADY PELHAM,—

"Sir James mentioned to me yesterday that you were seeking a companion. Miss Desborough, who will bring you this letter, is anxious to obtain a few hours' daily occupation. She is well known to an old patient of mine with whom she is at present staying.

Faithfully yours,

"HOWARD GLYNN."

"Oh, see her by all means," said Sir James. "Glynn's got a head on his shoulders. He wouldn't send anyone who was utterly incapable to see you. Shall I go or stay?"

"Stay by all means," said his wife, smiling. "I shall want you to invent an excuse for not engaging her if I take a dislike to her."

They were both a little surprised when Elsie entered. Girls who have to earn their own bread often look older than their years, but this one, on the contrary, had about her an air of extreme youth; she was a little creature, very slightly made. Only the wistful expression of her thin face, and the earnest sadness of her brown eyes suggested that she was not a child but a woman.

Lady Pelham scanned her strange guest all over without seeming to look at her, an accomplishment only possible to a lady of high degree, and quite different from the vulgar occupation of staring.

She decided that Miss Desborough was poor—very poor, judging from her shabby dress and plain cloth jacket; that she cared nothing about fashion or she could not have worn such a hideous hat, but that with it all, she was a lady, or she could not have appeared so utterly unconscious of her mean attire.

"How old are you, Miss Desborough? I am you living with your parents?"

"I am just twenty; my mother has been dead a great many years; my father is abroad, and I am living with an old friend till he returns."

This was the result of Mrs. Lovemore's teaching.

"Say as little as you can, Miss Elsie, but answer all their questions. If they ask where your father is for goodness sake, don't tell them that you've no idea, or they'd suspect something wrong at once, and you'd better not mention Miss Hilda; it doesn't sound respectable not to know where she is or what she's doing."

"Are you musical?" continued Lady Pelham. "Your voice is very pleasant in speaking, but can you sing?"

Elsie moved to the piano which stood open, and struck a few rich deep chords, then she began to sing, and the room was filled with such sweet, melodious notes as the listeners had seldom heard.

"Thank you," said Sir James, as she finished. "I enjoy an English song; one gets tired of the foreign things they give you at concerts nowadays."

But Lady Pelham's eyes were full of tears.

"Lucy used to sing that song," she whispered to her husband; to Elsie she only said kindly—

"You have a fortune in your voice, Miss Desborough; did you never think of becoming a professional?"

"Oh, no; I should be afraid to sing before a crowd, and papa could never afford the expense of training. I have never been able to have singing lessons."

"Do you mean you are self-taught?"

Elsie opened her eyes.

"I sing, because—I can't help it," she answered. "I went to school for a little while and learned my notes, and what people call the 'drugery' of music; but I generally play from ear."

"I think you will suit me," said Lady Pelham; "at any rate, I should like us to try. Could you come to me four mornings a week, from ten till one?"

"Yes. Which mornings would suit you best?"

"Well, come to-morrow, and we will settle then; but, Miss Desborough, we are forgetting one important question—terms! What salary should you require?"

"I had twenty pounds a year in Yorkshires, as junior teacher, but then I lived in the house. I have no idea how compensations are paid. Would fifteen pounds be too much?"

"Far too little, I should say," replied Lady Pelham. "Suppose we begin with three pounds a month? If you are willing, I am."

"Thank you very much! I do hope I shall suit you. It was so kind of Dr. Glynn to write to you."

Neither told her that the doctor's letter had not charmed them so much as her own sweet voice; but Lady Pelham, asked suddenly—

"Have you known Dr. Glynn long?"

"I have only seen him three or four times; but he is an old friend of Mrs. Lovemore, with whom I am staying."

"Well, my lady," said Sir James, after Elsie had departed, "what do you think of her?"

"I wonder if Dr. Glynn is in love with her? It was the irrelevant reply."

"Not he! Glynn is not a marrying man. But, seriously, what do you think of her?"

"I think she is a pretty child, with a wonderful voice; and that her father ought to have lived on bread and water rather than neglect such a talent as hers."

"Perhaps he couldn't help it," said Sir James, whose judgment was generally kinder than his wife's. "I say, Emily, when we find Alice Despard—"

"We never shall!" objected his lady.

"When we find Alice Despard," went on the

old gentleman, unrebuffed, "I shall be quite satisfied if she is as sweet-looking and lady-like as little Miss Desborough."

"She won't be!" retorted Lady Pelham, who had a positive genius for looking at the dark side of everything. "If ever we find Lucy's child she'll have red hair and freckles, dress like a milliner's apprentice, call me 'Your ladyship,' and be generally as trying and disgraceful a relative as fate can possibly send us!"

Sir James laid a kindly hand on his wife's shoulder.

"Don't be down-hearted, Emily! this child, by her own showing, can't have had many advantages, and she seems a lady in voice and manner; why shouldn't it be the same with Alice Despard?"

"Because it won't!" snapped his wife, thus securing the last word.

CHAPTER IV.

FOREIGN travel is delightful to all of us; there is something most enjoyable in visiting new scenes, and seeing fresh places; in basking in the summer sunshine, while our friends in England are afflicted with ice and snow; but there are just three conditions, the absence of which may take the edge off our pleasure. Firstly, we must be abroad of our own free will; the slightest necessity or compulsion about the matter robs our trip of half its charm; next, we must have a congenial companion who enjoys what we enjoy of the sights, and skips those we wish to shirk. Lastly, we must have a fair amount of money proportionate to our position and circumstances to spend.

Now, when Mr. and Mrs. Underwood reached the sunny south Hilda really believed she had achieved the summit of her desires. She was travelling to new scenes; she would be, for the first time in her life, "in" society; she would have lots of money, and no sordid care about making both ends meet.

Alas, for bright anticipations, the Honourable Edgar was about as selfish as men are made (which is saying a good deal). He had married Hilda because his passion for her was so intense he could not resign her to another man; but he had not the smallest intention of giving up anything for her sake. He had taken every possible precaution that their marriage, though a stolen one, should be lawful, but he intended to keep that marriage as secret as possible. He was almost entirely dependent on his father and Lord Underwood, who had a miserly desire for money though it only slipped through his fingers when he grasped it, had but one piece of paternal advice for his son—to marry an heiress!

So Mr. Edgar instead of taking his bride to Nice or Mentone, or any of the other well-known places where English people congregate, found out a very small intensely foreign village within an easy drive of the celebrated tables at Monte Carlo, got a house there—a maisonette, the owner called it—dirty cheap for the season. Two French servants were left by the owner, and no one in the whole place spoke a word of English.

Here at Villa St. Ursule he installed his wife. For two days he remained with her full of lover-like attentions, then the attractions of the tables were too much for him; he took to driving over to Monte Carlo early in the afternoon, and not returning until late at night. And this not one day in the week, but five or six.

Hilda Underwood was not the girl to stand this sort of treatment; she reproached her husband bitterly, but Edgar kept his temper and answered her with a smile.

"Be content when you are well off, my love. You're a house of your own and two servants at your service, neither of which advantages you ever enjoyed before. You're some very charming toilets (I choose them, you know in Paris), and a cook who thoroughly understands her business. You've no bills to trouble your pretty head; no work to do, and you ought to be a very happy little woman."

"Happy when you neglect me shamefully and leave me alone for hours!"

Edgar took out his cigar, looked gravely at his wife and spoke in a very different tone, but not angrily, for he was one of those men who never get into a rage; indeed, his cold calm was one of the things about him which most irritated his wife.

"We had better understand each other, my dear. You complain that I leave you alone; are not most women left alone while their husbands work for their support? Do you suppose lawyers, doctors, and clergy are accused of neglecting their wives, because they devote many hours to their clients, their patients, or their parish?"

"But you are not working, you only amuse yourself at Monte Carlo."

"On the contrary! I earn my living; if you believe you've married a rich man, my dear, you're mistaken. My bread and butter, and yours, depend on my skill at games of chance, and I have come abroad this year mainly because I hope to gather in a rich harvest at Monte Carlo."

"You are a gambler!"

"If you like to call it so—yes; I have just a hundred a year of my own, a legacy tied up in such a ridiculous way I can't realize it and spend the principal. Sometimes I have a little out of the governor, but he's pretty near as hard up as I am. For the rest I depend upon the green baize."

"But I thought you were a nobleman, that you would be Lord Underwood."

"I shall be Lord Underwood just as soon as the poor old governor shuffles off this mortal coil; and you'll be my lady, there's no mistake about that, Hilda."

"But noblemen are always rich."

"Are they? Well, my late lamented uncle was, if not extremely rich, very tolerably so; but you see he happened to leave a daughter, who inherited everything except the title."

"Then why didn't you marry her," asked Hilda, "and get it all back?"

"I had some regard for your feelings. No," as her colour rose, "it's a shame to tease you, Hilda. My cousin Emily was married ages ago while I was a small boy in knickerbockers. Luckily she can't keep us out of the money for ever, she has no children, so the moment she dies Castle Underwood and the rest of the property must come to us. Have a little patience, Hilda, you'll be a rich woman one of these days, but you must keep quiet just now; there'd be no end of a row if the governor heard of my marriage. You and I will just keep our secret to ourselves till the tide turns."

It was all very well, Hilda was no simpleton. She knew Edgar was prudent in keeping their marriage a secret. She had no scruples about his calling such as would have troubled a more sensitive girl, but for all that she was miserably dull in the long dreary hours when he was away. She grew to regard the Villa St. Ursule almost as a prison, and to well-nigh long even for the dingy London suburb, and the unappreciated little sister she had left.

"It's awfully lonely," she told Edgar, piteously, when the early spring had come, and still he showed no sign of returning to England. "If we are going to stay here much longer I wish you would let me send for Elsie, she could come over second class, so it wouldn't cost much, and I need not tell her of our marriage till she got here."

"It wouldn't be safe," he objected.

"It would be perfectly safe; you don't know Elsie. She is a regular little Puritan. Once make her promise to keep our secret and wild horses wouldn't wring it from her."

Edgar still refused his consent. He might have gone on doing so, but Hilda was taken ill, not dangerously, but sufficiently so to make her weak and languid, and the cheery little French doctor suggested that—

"Madame was too much alone, she ought to have someone with her. Had she perchance a mother or sister?"

Edgar was really fond of his wife after his own manner, so he gave in and said to her—

"You had better write to your sister, Hilda. I daresay she will cheer you up. I'll give you a

bank note to put in your letter. Tell her you are ill and want her badly; but you'd better not mention our marriage till she comes here."

"But if she addresses her letter to 'Miss Desborough' shall I get it?"

"Certainly. Date your letter, 'Care of Madams Underwood,' and she will naturally copy it down, you'll see it'll be all right."

But it was not. Just four days after posting her letter it was returned to Hilda with a few lines in the stiff, angular hand of the principal of the Yorkshire academy. Miss Ward wrote that Miss Elsie Desborough had never returned to her after the Christmas vacation, but had written saying she was ill, and dreaded the Yorkshire winter; of course, under these circumstances, Miss Ward would have been willing to release her, but it seemed to her very strange Miss Desborough's letter had no address, and thus gave her no chance of replying to it.

"There must be a mistake somewhere," said Hilda. "I wrote to Elsie that there was no home for her to come to at Christmas, and she had better stay quietly at school; surely after that she never went to London!"

Edgar remembered his own share in the matter, but had no intention of confessing it.

"It sounds awfully strange, Hilda. Perhaps your sister has followed your example."

Hilda gave a scornful little laugh.

"You don't know Elsie. I tell you she's a regular little Puritan, one could as easily fancy a statue sitting or having a lover as Elsie. Poor little Elsie, she was little more than a child. I wish I knew what had happened to her."

"Well, you must try and get on without her," said Edgar, carelessly; "but all the same I wish for your sake she had come, old girl."

He wished it yet more when the following morning a telegram arrived from Lord Underwood declaring important business awaited his son's attention at once, and hinting pretty plainly that if Edgar did not start for England his father would join him in the south.

"Don't go," pleaded Hilda. "I feel so ill and lonely. Don't go, Ned, or else take me with you."

"My dear child, I must go," he answered. "Unless you want my father to come and discover our domestic felicity. I must go, but I'll get back as soon as I possibly can, and you are no end better, you know."

It was no use saying anything. The Honourable Edgar never lost his temper, but he had a way of following his own will in the teeth of all remonstrance or entreaties which was well-nigh maddening to his young wife.

Castle Underwood being Lady Pelham's the reigning baron had no country seat, but lived in London in a very luxurious set of bachelor chambers not far from Piccadilly. He was an old reprobate, had done no good thing in his life, and a vast number of evil ones, but he thoroughly understood the art of making himself comfortable, a faculty which had descended to his son.

Edgar had expected some dire calamity, such as one of Lord Underwood's creditors (their name was legion) obtaining a judgment against him or selling him up; to find the peer breakfasting on all the luxuries of the season, and looking as handsome and careless as ever, was a shock to the dutiful son.

"Hang it all, my lord," he said, angrily, when the man-servant (valet, butler, footman and general factotum) had departed, "you'll cry wolf ones too often. Here I've rushed across Europe at frantic speed, expecting to find you in some awful fix, and you're as right as a trivet and as jolly as a sandboy. It's not fair on a fellow to deceive him!"

Lord Underwood drank some champagne (dry and of the choicest brand). He poured out a glass for his son from the bottle he had just opened.

"You'd better take it, Edgar," he said, mildly, "you'll need something to fortify you. As for your undutiful remarks I—I forgive you. If I bear up it's for your sake."

"Oh come," said Edgar, as he drank off the wine; "do speak plainly. What's up, has my estimable cousin presented her husband with an

heir! That would be bad news enough in all consciousness; but I don't think it's likely."

"Not in the least, though Emily Pelham never showed much consideration for us. Edgar, my boy, if you'll believe it, that woman is plotting to do you out of your rights. Of course she and her husband keep their plans dark; but I found it out last week by the merest accident."

"Aren't you running your head against a post?" demanded Edgar, coolly. "The whole world knows that you are the last Lord Underwood's twin brother, and that he left no children except Lady Pelham; therefore, falling son and daughter of her own, she can have no nearer kindred than ourselves."

"It's a mean despicable trick," said the old man, "I wouldn't have thought Emily capable of it. It seems her sister Lucy was married privately, and there was a child."

"What!"

"There was certainly a child. Alice Despard hasn't been heard of for twenty years. Nothing is known of her except that her mother died when she was ten days old, yet this mischief-making couple, James Pelham and his wife, are trying to find her out and rob us of our rights."

"I suppose Lucy Underwood's marriage was regular. How did you come to hear about it?"

"Oh, a man I know has dealings with Isaca (they've actually engaged Isaacs, the first detective in London), and he had the job of hunting half-a-dozen registers through for the certificate of Lucy Underwood's marriage with Claude Despard."

"I hope he did not find it."

"He found it safe enough. They were married at Old St. Pancras Church, and she is described as daughter of Reginald Tenth Baron Underwood. There is no mistake about it; the marriage was legal enough. There's another entry in the same church about a year later, the baptism of Alice, daughter of Claude and Lucy Despard."

"Whew! It looks black for us!"

"Black as night. The girl may be dead. Nothing's been heard of her I'm told since she was a baby. Hundreds of children die in infancy, and hundreds more before they are five years old."

"It looks bad for us. You didn't send for me though, I suppose, to tell me that."

"Hardly. I've thought out a plan, Edgar, that will save us yet. First, I must tell you I believe firmly that girl is alive."

"Why?"

"I can't explain. I've had other strange premonitions in my time and they've come true. I'd stake a hundred pounds that Alice Despard is alive!"

"So much the worse for us," groaned Edgar, "and what's your wonderful plan?"

"Only this. You must seek her out, Edgar. You've a head on your shoulders, and could outwit any detective if you gave your mind to it. You must find Alice Despard and marry her before she hears of her inheritance."

"What!"

Lord Underwood repeated his plans.

"You're a fascinating fellow, and always get on with women; find Alice Despard and marry her before she's an inkling of the truth. When she knows her rights she may suspect you were not quite disinterested; but she won't do that if you're careful, and if she does it couldn't do any real harm. If you marry Alice you'll make a better thing of it than if you inherited after me, for if I once came in for the property it might be dipped to pay my debts, and my creditors of course won't be able to claim a penny of your wife's money."

His wife's money! And that wife was the penniless child of a scoundrel who dared not show his face in England. It seemed to Edgar as he listened to his father he must have been mad indeed when he succumbed to the fascinations of Hilda Desborough.

"Of course it may be hard to find the girl," went on Lord Underwood, so engrossed with his own schemes he never noticed his son's silence, "but with so much at stake you ought to manage it."

Edgar was quite conscious he should never attempt to manage it at all; for him there was

but one hope that Alice Despard might never be found at all.

"I suppose you have told the Pelhams what you think of their meanness," said Edgar sullenly.

"Not a bit of it; I don't mean to let them know I've found out their tricks. I called there directly I heard the story. I wondered if they'd drop a word, but they maintained a discreet silence, and so did I. Emily was awfully ailing in the winter. I began to think we should spend next season at Castle Underwood, but she's picked up wonderfully lately."

"In the expectation of finding her niece?"

"I can't say; she'll hardly adopt Miss Despard for she has one girl living with her already, a pretty little creature too. She came there first as a sort of companion, to read to Emily and that sort of thing, but they took a fancy to her, and now to see her at Pelham House you'd think she was their own child."

"And I suppose she'll have Emily's savings, they must be worth a pretty penny by this time."

"Well," said Lord Underwood, frankly, "in any case you and I should have had no chance of them, so we need bear little Miss Desborough no malice."

"Desborough!" and man of the world though he was Edgar could not repress a start, "Is that the girl's name?"

"Elsie Desborough," said Lord Underwood, looking at him sternly; "you seem to know the name. I hope you haven't been carrying on any of your flirtations with her."

"I never set eyes on her," returned Edgar, "but I used to know a man called Desborough who played a very decent game of cards, and managed to pick up a tidy bit of money by his skill; he came a cropper last December, and nothing has been heard of him since, and he had a daughter. The name struck me as familiar, that's all."

"Well, I'm going to dine with the Pelhams to-night," said Lord Underwood. "I'll send Emily a line to say you have arrived and I'll bring you with me. You might, on the strength of your friendship for her father, contrive to get a little information out of Miss Desborough."

"As to what?"

"The search for Alice Despard."

It occurred to Edgar he might get a little information out of her for himself. Of course he decided this was Hilda's sister, there could hardly be two Elsie Desboroughs both earning their own living. Edgar decided that if he was to lose his inheritance, he and his wife would need the help of any rich relations they could discover.

If Elsie really were high in Lady Pelham's favour she might induce that lady to do something for her brother-in-law, therefore it would be just as well to inform her of the relationship.

The Pelhams had never had any open break with Lord Underwood and his son. There had been a very marked coldness and—on the Underwood side—a great deal of angry feeling; but things had never come to an open rupture, and when the old nobleman suddenly appeared to "inquire after his niece," Emily could do no less than receive his advances civilly, and second the invitation to dinner given him by her hospitable husband.

Mrs. Lovemore never ceased to congratulate herself on asking Dr. Glynn's advice about a situation for her dear young lady, for the Pelhams "look to" Elsie from the first, and before she had known them a month offered her a home and fifty pounds a year if she would take up her abode at the tall house near Lancaster-gate. Greatly as Giddy missed her nursing she was thankful to see her in such hands, and there was only one thing in her conduct which puzzled Elsie, she positively refused to see Lady Pelham when Emily wished to call on her respecting the new arrangement.

"I'm nothing but a servant, Miss Elsie, and I don't want to set up for anything else. I'm main glad you're with people like the Pelhams; but it's better for me not to see them. I should only feel uncomfortable."

Elsie Desborough did not neglect her old friend. Many an hour when she was free to amuse herself did she spend in Westmoreland-

road, and Mrs. Lovemore always welcomed her with delight.

"You'll see, my deary," said the good woman one day, "there's no sin in silence. If Lady Pelham had heard about your father and sister you might never have had this comfortable home. You take my advice, Miss Elsie, say as little as you can about the past. Depend upon it that's your safest plan."

CHAPTER V.

LADY PELHAM was a little disturbed when she received her uncle's letter saying Edgar would accompany him that evening.

"Dr. Glynn is coming," she said to Elsie, rather complainingly, "and Miss Maberly. We should have been just six, a cosy little party, and now Edgar will upset everything."

"I need not come in to dinner," said Elsie, "that will keep you the same number."

"And leave two gentlemen partnerless instead of one. No, that would be worse than anything. Edgar must come, I suppose, but Katy Maberly is an heiress, and my cousin is supposed to be looking out for a rich wife, so altogether it is very annoying."

However, she soon altered things to her satisfaction. The heiress' aunt, a pleasant matron of fifty turned, was invited, and Lady Pelham decided it would be perfectly safe to send Elsie in to dinner with her dangerous cousin, since it was well known Edgar could only afford to marry an heiress, and having been warned against him Elsie's peace of mind would not be endangered. This would leave Howard Glynn free to devote himself to Miss Maberly.

"For Dr. Glynn only wants a rich wife to ensure his success. He is a rising physician, and Katy's fortune and influential connections would be the making of him. By the way, Elsie, I never heard how you first became acquainted with Howard Glynn?"

"I was in great trouble, and he was very kind to me," said Elsie, in a low tone.

Lady Pelham looked up quickly.

"It's odd how little I know about you, considering how fond we are of you. Child, what makes you so silent and reserved, you never mention your father. I don't believe you have had a letter from him since you came here."

"Papa has been unfortunate," said Elsie, nervously. "Something he hoped to make a fortune by failed, and—he had to go abroad because he could not pay his debts. I know it sounds very wrong, but he could not help it."

"And don't you know where he is?"

"No; when I came home, for my Christmas holidays I found them gone, my father and sister. I have never had a line from either of them since."

"You poor dear child! No wonder you don't care to speak of your past; and then Mrs. Lovemore came to your rescue!"

"Mrs. Lovemore came and took me to her house. She is," something impelled Elsie to add this, "not a lady, but she has the kindest heart in all the world, and I love her dearly."

"And she cannot help you to find your father and sister?"

"She thinks I am best without them. It was she who warned me never to speak of the past to you. She said to have such a strange story would sound disreputable to you."

Lady Pelham looked keenly in her black satin dinner dress. Elsie, whose toilets were chosen by her patroness, was in soft pink cashmere, trimmed with creamy lace. Howard Glynn thought she had never looked so sweet, and then his mind went back to the woman he had once loved, who now made his life a weariness to him by the complaining letters she sent him constantly. Evidently Meta Carlyle considered him still her own property, but he knew quite well his heart had passed from her keeping to Elsie Desborough's.

"You are to take in Miss Maberly," Lady Pelham told him. "Dr. Glynn, a rich wife would be the making of you, and Katy has twenty thousand pounds."

She spoke in such a friendly way there was no

sting in her words. Howard smiled as he answered,—

"But I am not a marrying man, Lady Pelham. I am wedded to my profession."

The Underwoods arrived late. Howard was talking to Elsie as they entered; a cloud flitted over his face as he saw Lady Pelham advancing with Edgar.

"Miss Desborough, you are going to be introduced to one of the handsomest men in London, and one of the most cunning. Child, be warned in time; don't believe in Edgar Underwood distrust him when he is most fascinating, for he is bad to the very core."

There was no time for more; in another moment Lady Pelham and Edgar had reached them, a little later and Elsie was going in to dinner on his arm. Edgar Underwood waited till conversation was becoming general and there was little fear of his remarks to his neighbour being overheard, and then he turned to Elsie and said in a low thrilling voice,—

"You can have no idea how pleased I am to see you. Your name has long been familiar to me as a household word."

"But I have only been with Lady Pelham a little while, and this is your first visit to her since I came," objected Elsie.

"I was not alluding to Lady Pelham. Miss Desborough, can you keep a secret if I give you a message from someone you dearly love; will you regard it as a sacred confidence?"

"I don't understand," her very hands were trembling; "you do not mean—it is not possible that you have seen my father!"

"Not since he went abroad; but there is someone else longing for news of you; someone who has never been quite happy since her letters to you were returned, with the information you had left Yorkshire. Miss Desborough, have you forgotten that you have a sister?"

Elsie's eyes shone like two stars as she turned them eagerly towards him.

"Hilda! Oh! can you give me news of her—is she well—can I see her?"

"All in good time," promised Edgar; "I can tell you all you want to know, but not here with all these gaping eyes around us. I saw Hilda two days ago. I will answer all your questions if you will tell me where I can see you alone."

Elsie was silent. She remembered Dr. Glynn's warning. Fascinating as Edgar Underwood could be, this child felt a strange dread of him.

"Shall we say in Kensington Gardens near the broad walk?" suggested Edgar. "I will be there to-morrow at ten and wait until you come, is it agreed?"

The ladies were leaving the dining-room, there was only time for Elsie to murmur a nervous "Yes," and she was following Katy Maberly, who being a kindly natured girl in the main, and very partial to the little companion, did not ask any questions about the flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes.

Elsie fancied Howard Glynn avoided her that evening; little did she dream that he had overheard the appointment for the morrow, and only hesitated whether to inform Lady Pelham or himself go to the broad walk to watch over the girl who seemed in some strange fashion to be his own protégée.

He never misjudged Elsie. He had caught the name of Hilda, and felt certain she was meeting Edgar Underwood for the sake of news of her sister. He remembered the old story in Egerton-road, that Hilda Desborough had a lover of far higher rank than herself. He guessed pretty accurately that Underwood could explain Hilda's disappearance better than anyone else in the world, but the one thing he did not suspect was—the marriage.

Edgar Underwood spent an almost sleepless night, but by morning his mind was made up; he would bind Elsie to secrecy, and then reveal that Hilda was his wife. He would make the girl understand her sister's whole future depended on Alice Despard's not being found, and then would induce her to tell him all she knew about the search for the heiress.

It was early spring, the trees in Kensington Gardens were just in bud, and the whole scene was full of charms for any lover of nature; but

Dr. Glynn hardly heeded its beauties, he had eyes for nothing but the two figures who sat in earnest consultation on a bench not far from him.

"Hilda's fate is in your hands," he heard Underwood say; "you know her well, and how unfit she is to struggle with poverty. Your influence with Lady Pelham is great, everyone is talking of it. Induce her to give up this wild goose chase, and leave me and my wife in possession of our rights."

Howard Glynn could barely catch the reply, he was not in Sir James Pelham's confidence, and so this was the first intimation he had of the search for Alice Despard.

"I don't think I have any influence with Lady Pelham," said Elsie, "and Mr. Underwood, right is right, if this Miss Despard is alive she ought to be her aunt's heiress."

"Nonsense; if the search stops she will never know anything about it. She has probably been brought up in poverty, and would be quite out of her sphere as a great lady. Well, you must take your choice. Tell me all you have heard of the search for Alice Despard, and pledge me your word you will try and persuade the Pelhams to drop their mad scheme of finding her, or you shall never see your sister's face again."

"But, if Hilda is your wife, I must be able to find her," objected Elsie.

"You have passed your solemn promise not to reveal our marriage; besides," and he sneered bitterly, "when I go home and tell Hilda you have refused to lift a finger in her cause I don't think she will believe in your boasted affection, or have any desire to see you."

There came a long silence; then Elsie said, gravely,—

"It can't do any harm to tell you this. Nothing whatever has been heard of Alice Despard, and the detective is in despair; he says unless her father changed his name and lived under an assumed one he is ready to swear the girl is not alive. There is no trace whatever of the Despard family for the last fifteen years. Lady Pelham still clings to hope, but Sir James thinks her niece must be dead."

"Well," and Underwood's tone was more cordial, "that sounds encouraging. Now, don't you see how easy your task will be! You have only to keep assuring Lady Pelham the quest is useless, you might hint even that if she persists in it she will be the victim of some impostor; in short—"

But Dr. Glynn would have no more of this. He had seen Elsie tortured long enough. Advancing towards the pair, he lifted his hat as though he had just arrived on the scene, and greeted Elsie with,—

"Good morning, Miss Desborough! lovely weather, isn't it? I didn't know you were such an early riser, Mr. Underwood."

"I am going to breakfast with my father," replied Edgar, raging in his heart, "but stopped to inquire after Lady Pelham. I am glad she is no worse for her exertions last night. Good morning, Miss Desborough!"

He was gone.

Elsie turned to Glynn with a little gasping cry, as soon as he was out of sight.

"Don't try to tell me anything," he said, kindly, "for I overheard all; that fellow is a greater scoundrel than I thought for."

"Was I wrong to refuse to promise?"

"You would have been very wrong to lend yourself to such a horrible scheme; but who is Miss Despard, and how does she come to be Lady Pelham's niece?"

"She is the child of her only sister. Lady Pelham's one desire is to find her, because she feels sure Lord Underwood and his son would ruin the property."

"So they would."

"But you heard what he said? He will never let me see Hilda again."

"If your sister is really Mrs. Underwood he will be bound to acknowledge the marriage before long; and you may be quite sure that he will not refuse Lady Pelham's overtures to his wife. When she hears he has married your sister you may trust to her for the rest."

"It is very strange how kind she is to me."

"I don't see the strangeness; everyone ought to be kind to you."

"Have you heard from Mrs. Carlyle lately?"

"Have you?"

"Yes; she is miserable at Walden, and wants to come back to London. She says her aunt would take care of the children if she could get a situation as housekeeper to a widow."

"And end by marrying the widower," said Glynn. "Well, it would be the best thing she could do."

"I am quite sure she does not mean that."

Glynn looked at her shrewdly.

"Child, don't believe all that Meta tells you; I fear she is given to romancing."

"You ought not to speak of her like that," cried Elsie, indignantly. "Even if you were angry with her at the time, it is so long ago, you might forget it."

"Forget what?" demanded Howard. "Come, Elsie, I insist upon knowing what pretty little story my cousin has told you."

But it was only after further persuasion that he got this answer:—

"She said you wanted to marry her, and that you had never forgiven her for marrying Mr. Carlyle; but, after all, you were her first love, and she can never care for anyone else."

"I am very much obliged to her," said Glynn; "the story is true in part, but the variations are considerable. Meta Carter and I were boy and girl lovers, Elsie; we had been engaged two years, and were to be married in a week when she eloped with my closest friend, Geoffrey Carlyle."

"Oh, how could she?" broke from his indignant listener; "it must have spoiled your life."

"It killed my faith in women," said the Doctor, "but it made me throw myself more entirely into my profession; as to not forgiving Meta, I have long been thankful to her for acting as she did. Free from the glamour of youth I can see her as she is, and I know we should have been miserable together. For the sake of auld lang syne I should be glad to know she was doing well, but personally I have not the slightest wish to see her face again."

"And nothing can bring back your love for her?"

"Nothing; for years I thought my heart was closed against all love; but last December I awoke to a knowledge of my mistake. I found that a newer, purer love was growing over the grave of the old one. Elsie, I had not meant to tell you my story quite so soon, but I cannot keep silent now. Darling, I love you with every fibre of my heart; will you be my cherished wife?"

"But—Mrs. Carlyle?"

"Dear, if you had never crossed my path the result as regards Meta would have been the same. Nothing in the world can mend a broken faith or revive a dead love."

"I have loved you always," whispered the girl, shyly, "ever since that night, but—" "Let me hear the 'buts,' but I warn you I shall not be conquered by them."

"My father will never be anything but a sorrow and disgrace," said the girl, slowly, "and I shall never have a sixpence. Lady Pelham says you ought to marry some one with money, and influential connections."

He smiled.

"I am not afraid of what your father may do, child. As to Lady Pelham, I shall tell her I have only taken her advice; she's always telling me I ought to marry."

And when Dr. Glynn strolled across to the gate where his carriage waited (he really *had* set up a brougham, and so fulfilled Meta's prediction) to take him to his long-suffering patients, there was not a happier man in London, for he had won a treasure he valued more than gold and rubies, the love of sweet, penniless little Elsie Desborough.

CHAPTER VI, AND LAST.

"Gone to marry my little Miss Elsie," said Mrs. Lovemore, when Dr. Glynn called that very evening to tell her the great news; "well, you're

a brave man, Doctor, seeing I've told you what a bad lot her father is."

"Elsie must take after her mother, then," returned Howard, cheerfully, "for there is nothing bad about her; now Mrs. Lovemore, don't, please, preach prudence. I am doing well; I can keep a wife in comfort, and I mean to be married in June."

"What does Lady Pelham say?" inquired the widow.

"She says we are a very rash young couple, and that we are tempting Providence; but all the same she means to give Elsie a trousseau and wedding breakfast, while Sir James generously insists on settling a thousand pounds upon my pretty fiancée."

"That's very liberal."

"I meant to tell you one thing; Hilda Desborough is discovered, at least I have good reason to believe she is Edgar Underwood's wife, and is living with him on the Continent."

"Ah! And she'll expect to come in for Castle Underwood one of these days, but mark my words, Dr. Glynn, she's wrong; I hear Lady Pelham is looking for her sister's child, and she will oust the younger branch of the family entirely."

"If she is found," suggested Howard, "but there does not seem much chance of it."

"By the way, sir, I should main like to see Lady Pelham. I've refused to go to her before; but now my young lady's to be married it's a very different thing. Do you think I might call at Pelham House?"

"Lady Pelham is coming here to see you tomorrow morning. She said she would not write first for fear you should make some excuse."

Mrs. Lovemore's little maid ushered Lady Pelham into the best parlour and closed the door. The visitor began some kindly greeting, then, as she caught a fuller view of the widow's face her carefully prepared little speech died on her lips, and she exclaimed:—

"Caroline, is it possible?"

"Yes, Miss Emily. My lady, I should say. It's Caroline right enough. I stayed with your poor sister till her death. I stayed with her child afterwards till that man's conduct drove me away, then I married my poor husband, who left me a little bit of money, and here I am."

(Continued on page 525.)

LEILA VANE'S BURDEN.

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CHAPTER XXIX.

AFTER tea had been served in the grandest fashion possible, Leila went to pay a visit to the room that had been her home for so long, the scene of so much hardwork, so much sorrow.

Margot would have prevented this, if she could, but there are some things which even our closest and dearest do not care to approach, and the story of that most unhappy past which was woven in and about this shabby little house was something that Margot had never once ventured to touch upon in all the hours of confidence that had passed between Leila and herself of late.

Mrs. Newton expressed herself as only too delighted and honoured too, that Leila should travel up the many narrow stairs.

"Only don't be staying too long, my lady," she said, "for it strikes cold away from the fire."

The thought flashed through her mind as it did through Leila's, of the days and days of damp and cold, when not even a glimmer of heat or light had sparkled in the little attic grate, to cheer the girl on in her work.

"There's that about Miss Vane—her ladyship I did oughter say as 'ull never change, miss, never," Mrs. Newton said to Margot as they were alone, and then she dropped her voice to a mysterious whisper.

"She'll be wantin' to know what's gone with all the things as he left, and she give to me.

You know, miss, the things as used to be in his room!"

Margot looked round.

"What has happened to them, Mrs. Newton?"

"Why he come and claimed the lot, turned up here as bold as brass, and just as well as ever—took me all aback, as you may guess, miss, me not expecting him. Oh! but he's a old fox, he is! If ever there was one! Of course I soon recovered myself, miss, and I looked at 'im 'ard. 'We didn't 'ope for this pleasure, Mr. Vane, sir,' I ses, and he only laughs at me, 'a cart 'ull come round to-morrow, my dear madam,' he ses, quite cheerful, 'and remove my furniture, will you be so good as to see that the men are careful in taking away the things.' Well, at that, miss, I just lost my temper, and I said all I wanted to say—a little of the truth I were longing to let out all that time last winter, but do you think I done any good—lor, miss," Mrs. Newton rose and took the kettle from the hearth to replenish the teapot, "he only smiled at me! I told 'im Miss Vane made me a present of the things as was left, and he answered me back good-tempered all the time, 'my daughter, Lady Bernadine, is exceedingly generous to go a makin' gifts of what don't belong to her!' Oh! there I tell you Miss Margot, if he 'adn't took himself off I think I should have been obliged to 'it him with something or other! 'It 'im 'ard, too!'"

Naturally Margot could not resist a smile at this homely eloquence, but her feelings matched Mrs. Newton's so exactly that the smile did not linger very long.

"And you let him take the things!" she said; she was wondering in a vague sort of way how it was that Eustace Vane had not commenced in some shape or other to disturb Leila's happiness. She never doubted that this was something that must happen sooner or later, and, although she shared to the full her mother's confidence in Julian's power to protect Leila in every sense of the word from actual annoyance, Margot was only too well timed to know her girl friend's mind not to feel assured that Leila would suffer the greatest mental pain and disturbance should there be open warfare between her husband and her father.

"He has been much too quiet," Margot said to herself uneasily as her thoughts dwelt on Eustace Vane.

She let Mrs. Newton ramble on, and the good-hearted working-woman's tongue seemed loosed by the excitement and honour of this visit.

"I think there should be some sort of place where folk like 'im could be shut up, just so as they don't do no 'arm to no one; he was very grand talking of his daughter, Lady Bernadine, and he never give a thought, not he, to the time when that daughter slaved and starved herself to keep 'im in luxury! Oh! I 'ope, Miss Margot, that he'll never come callin' here no more. I ain't got no patience when I think about 'im, that I ain't!"

Margot was quite of Mrs. Newton's opinion, but she only smiled and said nothing, and indeed the lodging-house keeper had not finished with her confidences.

"And 'e weren't the only one has 'as been here, miss," she went on as she poured out a second cup of tea; "there were a shabby sort o' man as come a enquirin' after Miss Le—, her ladyship, as I did oughter say, just three or four days ago. He asked ever so many questions. I heard 'im. Jane went to the door, and she got fairly flustered, because, you see, miss, she 'ad her orders from me as she's to know nothink—just nothink about her ladyship, or what she's done, or where she's livin'. I know the sort of people as would go huntin' after the daughter when they can't get nothing out of the father. Oh! I know 'em; and Jane knows better than to say a word to any o' 'em about her ladyship!"

Margot was feeding the old dog with some cake. Her heart responded warmly to all this humble friendship and sympathy for Leila.

"I am glad you are careful, Mrs. Newton," she said, earnestly. "Of course these people only come to worry Lady Bernadine about her father's debts; they cannot want anything else. I suppose, if the truth were known, he has told them—"

that his daughter would hold herself responsible!"

"That's about it, miss," Mrs. Newton said, emphatically; "well, they don't get no change out of me. This one he was very persistent like, he wanted to know where Miss Vane were gone, and how long she'd been gone, and would I forward a letter! And I weren't too civil to him, miss. I just told him as I'd not do nothing! It were very mean like of me, miss, but I pretended as I were sick and tired of hearing the name of Vane, and was glad to be rid of the whole lot; and I told him, too, what I 'ope he'll believe, miss, that if he wanted to find Miss Vane, it were my opinion, he'd have to go a long while to find her! Oh! he got nothing out of me, miss, and what's more I don't mean to tell Miss Leila. There, it will come more easy to call her that than the other name! If she hears that there's been someone wanting her so pressin' like, she'll only fret herself and think all sorts of things. If he comes here again; but," Mrs. Newton shook her head with a smile of conviction, "but I don't think he will come in a 'urry; not he! It were just a try on and it failed!"

Margot rose as she heard Leila coming down the stairs.

"If there ever should be anyone very annoying, I think it would be better for you to write and tell Sir Julian, he will soon settle the matter," she said hurriedly; and Mrs. Newton had only just time to nod her head in assent before Leila came in.

Her pilgrimage to the poor desolate place that once had been her mockery of home, had brought no outward sign of agitation on her face but Margot could read beneath the surface, and she felt only too sure that this visit must have roused up a very array of old memories and miseries best forgotten that would sting and burn, however bravely the girl would try to conquer them.

When they were out in the street walking swiftly home through the dusk Margot spoke out her regret involuntarily.

"I am so sorry you went there, Leila," she said softly.

Leila turned with a start; they had been walking in silence for some moments.

"Sorry I no, don't say that my Midget. I never before knew the value, the force of contrast. Just think what my life was there and what my life is now! If ever I had wanted something to prove to me how beautiful my life is now and is always going to be it would only have needed this visit to my old home to give me this proof." Leila laughed a little unsteadily, "and oh! Margot," she added, "the joy of being able to give! of being able to do something to give pleasure to others! I shall carry a remembrance of dear old Mrs. Newton's face with me for many and many a day! Money is a wonderful treasure, a great, great power! It is all so new to me still that you must forgive me for giving vent to these stale phrases. I dare say you understand all I am feeling!"

Margot answered quietly, and slipped her hand through Leila's arm.

"I think we had better take a hansom," she said, as they left Mount Royal-street, well behind them. "It must be nearly half-past five, and Julian will be furious with me!"

But Leila preferred to walk.

"We will risk Julian's anger; I am not afraid of it if you are!"

"You are marvellously courageous," Margot retorted, laughingly; but in truth she was very much relieved and surprised, too, to find that her fears over Leila's visit to those desolate, dingy old rooms had been unnecessary, and that so little harm had been done, by what she knew had been a trial.

"It is a proof that her nervous system is altogether different, altogether stronger," Margot said to herself, her heart rising at the thought.

They walked on briskly, for the wind was blowing very cold now, and they drifted into a happy laughing chat as they went.

Leila was so strangely happy these days. All the restraint and the trouble worked by Mrs. Bernadine's attitude towards herself had melted away since she had come to London. She met her happiness, too, so resolutely.

When Leila had driven away from Wilton Crobie she had, as a sort of comfort to herself, determined that if any opportunity were given her of doing so delicately and quietly she would open her heart to Mrs. Sylvester and take her advice on this matter of Mrs. Bernadine; but she had scarcely been an hour in the genial sympathetic atmosphere of her friends' home, before all her worries seemed to vanish into thin air, and later on when the thought of confiding either to Margot or Mrs. Sylvester came into her mind Leila instantly dismissed it.

"It would hurt Julian dreadfully if he thought I could speak against his mother even in the very faintest way," she had said to herself; "and more so if he thought I could take my troubles to anyone but to him. No doubts all will be different when I go back; at all events I will try and make them different."

The sojourn with Margot and her mother had come at the very moment it was most needed, and when the girl returned to Wilton Crobie it would be with her spirit refreshed and strengthened in every way.

"I mean to carry you back with me when I go, Margot," Leila cried, as they walked on swiftly. "You won't say no, will you, dear?"

Margot coloured faintly beneath her veil. Brave as she was the pain of her heart was not quite gone yet.

"Of course I won't say 'no,' Leila; only I must not leave mother quite alone, and Cicely will not be home till January, I am afraid."

"Oh, Mrs. Sylvester must come too!"

The two girls were close to the big house in Belgrave-square by this, and as they hurried along they could see the lights glancing from the windows as a sort of greeting to them.

The keen east wind that swept through the streets hastened the footsteps of most of those who found themselves out of doors, but there was an occasional loiterer; and just as Leila and Margot had reached the steps of Mrs. Sylvester's house they passed a shabby, ill-clad man who was sauntering along the pavement whistling softly to himself, and seemingly impervious to the biting cold of the winter dusk.

Neither of the girls noticed him; there was, in fact, no reason why they should do so, and he, in his turn, bestowed no notice on them till, as they ran up the steps, Leila's voice sounded out clearly as she made some laughing remark.

The man on the pavement paused irresolutely, all his indifference gone as that sound reached his ear; he had no air of excitement upon him for a moment, then he moved forward as though he would have spoken, and then the butler had opened the door and the two charming girlish figures had flitted into the big well-lit hall and were lost to sight.

The man stood gazing at the door for another whole moment, and as he stood a postman came towards him, brisk and busy, going in and out of each doorway with a packet in his hand and his bag slung over his shoulder.

Rousing himself and shivering a little in the wind, the man suddenly addressed the postman and asked for the name of the owner of the big house in front of which he was standing.

The postman stopped whistling for an instant, with a glance half curiosity, half suspicion, then he spoke Mrs. Sylvester's name, and with a characteristic sling of the canvas bag higher on his shoulder passed quickly on.

The other looked after him, then shrugged his shoulders and continued his walk.

"A mistake," he said to himself; "but the voice was just what I remember hers used to be, only brighter, younger one might almost say besides, if that old woman's story was true, and why should it not be true? The girl I want is a long way off from where I am now."

He fell into his former storking walk again, and in a little while he was out of the square, and the dusk and gloom of the park had swallowed him up out of sight.

Margot reported all that had occurred to her mother, who listened attentively.

She had a passing smile of contempt for the story of how Eustace Vane had presented himself in Mount Royal-street and claimed his old furniture.

"Which was never his at any time," she said as she smiled.

She commended Margot for advising Mrs. Newton to apply direct to Julian if any other persons appeared inquiring for Leila.

"No doubt there is a fine assortment of debts, of which the child knows nothing. Mrs. Newton ought to send these individuals on to where the furniture has been taken."

Margot smiled a little like her mother now.

"Don't you know Mr. Vane better than to suppose he would be so simple as to leave a clue to his whereabouts? The furniture was taken to a warehouse to be stored for a time."

"Well," Mrs. Sylvester said after this, "then Julian is the proper person to deal with all this, and so I shall tell him to-night."

Then Margot spoke of Leila's desire that she should return when they did, and stay at Wilton Crobie for some time.

To her surprise Margot found that her mother seconded this warmly.

"I don't like to lose my hair for long," Mrs. Sylvester said, with that soft tone that came into her voice now and then, "and certainly if you don't want to go, Margot, it will be better to refuse; but if you feel you are equal to any strain such a visit might entail upon you I confess I should be delighted for you to do what Leila wants. How do you feel yourself?"

Margot stretched out her hands to the fire; she smiled faintly.

"I feel that I shall be very happy at Wilton Crobie, if you think you can spare me; perhaps you will come down too, mother, as Leila suggests—she would be so delighted!"

Mrs. Sylvester nodded her head.

"Perhaps I will," she said in her usual curt way. She stood looking into the fire a moment.

"How happy the child is, Margot," she said, breaking her silence after that moment; "it seems almost incredible that she could be the Leila we have known. This visit to Mount Royal-street is, as you say, the greatest test, and the greatest proof at the same time of the wonderful way the child's over-strained nervous system has been strengthened and changed. I certainly feared she would come home much upset," Mrs. Sylvester paused again; "it settles a theory of mine pretty conclusively, too," she said, after a moment, and her tone was so concise that Margot looked at her mother inquiringly. Mrs. Sylvester answered that look in words.

"A theory," she said, "that Eustace Vane has assuredly lost the power to hurt or distress Leila as he used to do, and that I do not fear his influence upon her in the future unless it is worked by another person and for another end altogether!"

Margot looked mystified.

"What other person could work upon him, mother?" she asked hurriedly.

But Mrs. Sylvester was bustling out of the room.

"Dinner will be served at seven, you know, Margot. If you don't run and dress you will be late, and you will make us late too for the beginning of the play. Hurry up, my dear, I expect Leila is ready long ago!"

Margot hurried obediently; but her mind dwelt a little on her mother's enigmatical speech as she changed her outdoor clothes for a pretty evening frock.

"Mother never speaks without thought or reason," the girl said to herself, and she determined before very long that she would ask direct for the reason that lay at the bottom of those last words that had been spoken about Leila's father and her future.

CHAPTER XXX.

MARGOT had to wait a long time for a chance of carrying this determination into effect.

As a matter of fact, her mother's somewhat mysterious words slipped from her memory altogether in the days that followed.

The Bernadines were leaving town at the end

of the week, and each day, hour in fact, was filled with engagements and little businesses which appertained chiefly to shopping and other such things, so that there was no time for confidential chat.

It was decided that Margot was to go back with Sir Julian and his wife.

"And I mean to keep her all the winter," Leila cried defiantly to Mrs. Sylvester.

Julian was almost as pleased as his wife at Margot's decision.

"There will be one person, however, who will not join in with our pleasure," he said to Leila, and his eyes had a significant expression as they turned in the direction of Giles Bernadine, who was dining, as he very often did now, with the Sylvesters, and was talking to Margot with an ill-repressed air of despondency over him.

Leila had a rush of tender feelings, as her heart as she followed her husband's eyes.

"Oh, poor boy! I have been so selfish, only thinking of myself all this time. Julian, we must ask him down for the New Year; he will be able to come, won't he?"

"For a day or two, I expect. Ask him yourself, my sweetheart."

Leila was not long in carrying out this pleasant task, and the delight that rushed over the young man's face gave her a throb of joy.

"He loves Margot with all his heart and soul," she said afterwards to Julian; "but who could wonder at it? To me I think Margot grows more beautiful in mind and body each day I know her."

Julian's jealousy of Margot had decreased and vanished altogether since he had spent these days in her mother's house.

The feeling that had come so naturally to his own mother was not natural to Julian, and, indeed, he found a new pleasure in watching and comprehending the deep unfeeling love that existed between the girl friends.

"She doesn't seem to give him much encouragement though, does she?" he answered Leila's speech.

"Oh, that will come later perhaps—at any rate she likes him immensely, and that is a great step!"

Julian smiled.

"Is it, little match-maker?"

It was a gay party that started from Euston for Wilton Crosbie, for Leila had simply carried Mrs. Sylvester off by force.

"I can only stay a few hours," Margot's mother had cried as she yielded.

"You are going to stay as long as I choose," was Leila's remark to this.

She had written a charming letter to Mrs. Bernadine announcing the day and hour of their return, and the arrival of the guests who were going to spend Christmas with them.

She had sent only a few words, but she had infused into them all the affection she desired so eagerly to lavish on her husband's mother.

Not one of her three companions would have been able to guess at the motive that had urged Mrs. Sylvester to pay this brief visit to Wilton Crosbie.

She had not needed any confidence from Leila, shrewd woman as she was; she had gauged pretty correctly the real state of things between the young mistress of Wilton Crosbie and the old one.

She honoured and loved Leila for her loyalty to her husband and to that husband's mother; but there had been to her eyes plain evidence of some little strain—some little jarring note that had marred the complete happiness of the girl's first days of life at Wilton Crosbie, and as this evidence—this slight worried expression—had vanished so completely after only a few hours' sojourn in her house Mrs. Sylvester had immediately assured herself that her first fears had been correct, and that the jarring note, however faint it might be, had been wrought by Mrs. Bernadine's influence, and by none other.

"Poor silly creature!" she had said to herself, not without a touch of sincere pity for the suffering that she knew would be attached to the workings of a mind so impregnated with jealousy. "Poor silly creature! No doubt she is as unhappy as she can be; but it is just as likely that her silliness may become dangerous if it is

allowed to develop too much. Leila will tell me nothing, so I will go there for a day or two, and make my own observations."

Whatever objectionable feelings may have had possession of Mrs. Bernadine's mind towards her daughter-in-law and the guests who accompanied Leila they were not disclosed either in her manner or her expression.

She was perhaps quieter, more subdued altogether than she had been on the occasion of Mrs. Sylvester's last visit to Wilton Crosbie; but she was as charming as ever, and her remarkable youth and beauty had never seemed stronger than they were now.

She had a warm greeting from Margot and Mrs. Sylvester. Leila she kissed in a gentle yet sweet way, but she flung herself into her boy's arms with all the old impulsiveness and eagerness which had marked her treatment of him.

Mrs. Sylvester was pleased at this sign of impulse. She thought it spoke altogether of a more healthy feeling than she had expected to find, and though she watched very narrowly, she was bound to confess that whatever Mrs. Bernadine's manner might have been in the beginning of Julian's married life there was no great fault to be found with it now.

It was Leila who quite innocently gave her friend to understand how big a change Mrs. Bernadine had made in her manner to her daughter-in-law. It was not the words the girl said that betrayed so much, it was the expression of relief that had been written so very clearly on Leila's lovely face in the first moment of entering her husband's home, and greeting her husband's mother.

"Let us hope she has conquered herself finally and thoroughly," was Mrs. Sylvester's thought.

She found nothing to jar on her during the days that followed; nevertheless she still kept to the conclusion that Julian and his wife would be happier in the long run if the older woman were to make her home apart from theirs.

"It is certainly not my business, and I can't interfere. I spoke out to Julian more plainly than I should ever have dreamed of doing under ordinary circumstances, and I achieved nothing by my plain words, so it is pretty evident I cannot speak again," Mrs. Sylvester said to herself; "all the same, I wish Leila would pluck up her spirit and boldly broach the matter. It is all very smooth and gentle, and yet I am not quite content. A weak jealous nature is always a weak jealous nature, and this one is not used to bear much. Thank Heaven Julian managed to save her from that old scoundrel's schemes. She would have been a broken-hearted woman in a week. How on earth so charming a creature as she is could have been taken in by such a man is more than I can understand. Poor Leila, if she could know all that happened in the summer she would be better prepared for all that may come in the future! but things are better as they are—for this last knowledge would be enough to cloud her married happiness for ever!"

Before taking her departure from Wilton Crosbie Mrs. Sylvester had extracted a promise from Mrs. Bernadine that she would go to London early in the new year and pay a long visit.

Mrs. Bernadine consented willingly.

"I shall enjoy helping dear pretty Cis choose her trousseau," she said, and then she had sighed wistfully. "I am a little out of the habit of paying visits," she went on with a faint smile that was touched with sadness, "but now it is different. Julian has someone to look after him better than I can—he will not miss me!"

Mrs. Sylvester was touched by the wistfulness, but she did not intend to show this, or to let so fine an opportunity escape her.

"Ah! my dear," she said briskly, "that is just the one lesson we mothers always alink from learning, and it is just the very lesson we ought to learn first of all. We are everything to our chicks as long as they are chicks, but as soon as they are fully fledged and are launched in the world, with a new companion, they show us that they are better without us, and that we are better away from them!"

Mrs. Bernadine's face had flushed and then grown very pale. Bitter and even passionate words fluttered on her lips, but she did not speak them; that strong subtle power that had her so completely in hand checked the impulsiveness with which a little while ago she would have answered this speech. She knew it was uttered with a distinct purpose in every word; and Mrs. Sylvester would have been strangely astonished, and perturbed too, if she could have realised exactly how much harm her blunt opinion was about to work in the hysterical, jealous, miserable heart of the woman to whom she spoke.

She did notice the pallor and the pained look in the eyes, but she attributed them to the natural shrinking of this overfond mother to the sentiment she had expressed.

"Poor creature!" she said again to herself; and then she had a feeling of relief in picturing the benefit she would work to Mrs. Bernadine during their forthcoming stay together, and so indirectly to the young couple whose happiness she had so much at heart.

Winter seemed to slip away altogether for a time after the New Year was here.

"Do you ever remember such weather at this time of the year?" was the question that passed and repassed a hundred times a day.

"We shall suffer for this in the summer; I suppose there will be snow in July!" Sir Julian said, as the sun poured down upon them with wonderful strength and warmth.

"I don't care how long it lasts," Margot cried. She was looking at Leila. Never since she had first learned to love her friend had she seen such a glow of health on Leila's delicate face.

"It reminds me of our old Christmas days," Mrs. Bernadine said, in the wistful gentle voice that was her ordinary tone nowadays.

Giles Bernadine had come and gone.

"When are you coming back to town?" he had asked Margot as he said farewell.

"I do not mean to go till I am driven away," she had answered, laughingly, at which Leila had clapped her hands.

"Then you will never go! Never, never, never!"

Mrs. Bernadine was thinking this over, as they were all clustered together in the big hall this lovely sunny morning.

"Does she really mean to stay for ever?" the woman asked herself, sullenly.

She had all at once conceived a dislike for Margot. She imagined that the girl's presence was all part of a plot between Leila and Mrs. Sylvester to discomfort her, never stopping to ask herself what reason they should have for discomforting her.

Margot's presence was a barrier in the pathway of her spite, her jealous eagerness to wrench Julian's love and trust away from his wife. Margot brought such an atmosphere of bright healthy happiness into the small circle that Mrs. Bernadine unconsciously yielded to the influence herself.

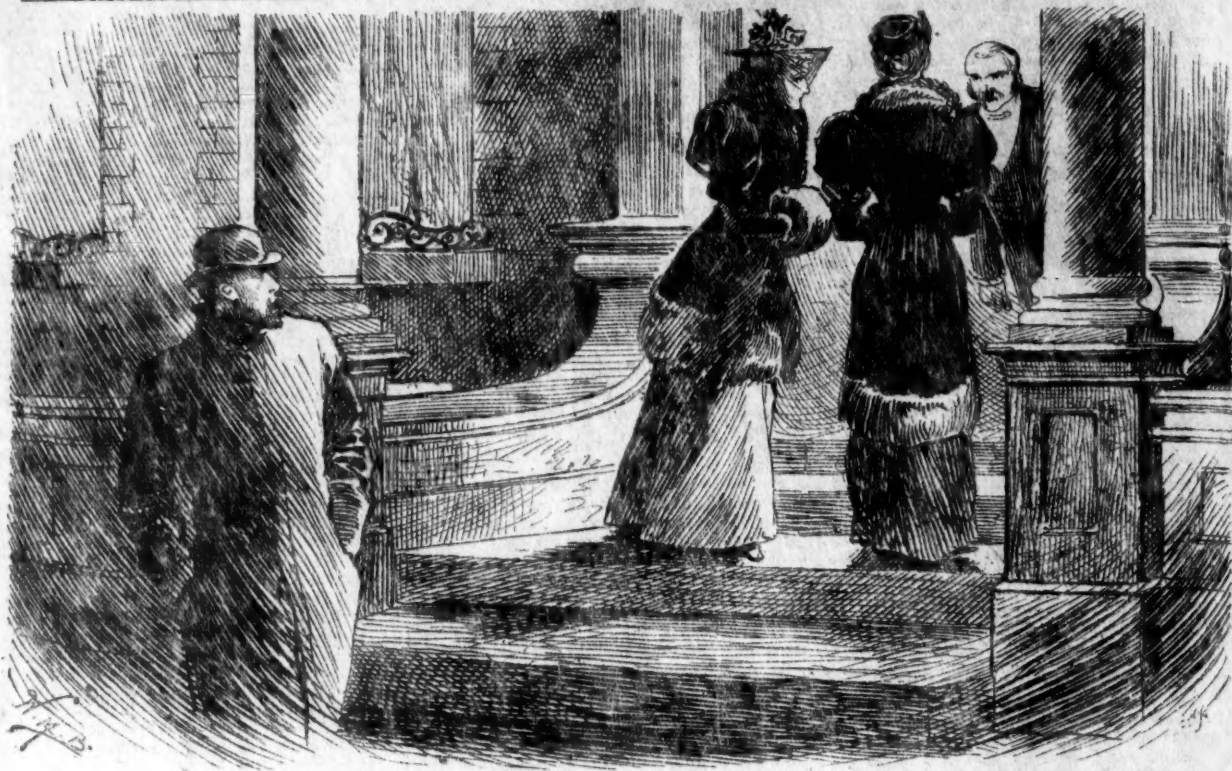
A few months ago she had loved Margot, and she had never been so happy as when the girl was her guest. This was all altered now. She wanted to argue with herself that she would have grown to love Margot more and more had she been made his wife instead of Leila; but she must have known perfectly well that she would have had just the same hot jealousy against any girl Julian might have married as against Leila; although, of course, circumstances had been terribly aggravated where Leila was concerned.

Margot was happily ignorant of this change of feeling towards herself. She was, in fact, a little sorry for Mrs. Bernadine, but she was most careful not to let this escape.

The girl herself was fast growing into her old peaceful, happy self again, and though she did not realise how strong the feeling was, she had an undeniable sense of pleasure attached to all intercourse with Giles Bernadine. Leila, too, had quickly learned to like her husband's cousin most warmly.

"I wish he could have stayed," she said, as they fell to discussing Giles on this particular morning.

"I think your interest in my cousin most un-



THE MAN ON THE PAVEMENT PAUSED IRRESOLUTELY AT THE SOUND OF LEILA'S VOICE

pardonable, madam!" Julian observed as he pinched her ear.

"I don't mind confessing that I love him with all my heart!" Leila cried lightly. "He is so handsome, such a dear, sweet, boy, and, thank Heaven, he begins to look quite happy again! Julian, he ought to be very grateful to you for all you did for him."

Julian was stroking the delicate cheek now.

"I think he is grateful, sweetheart," he said, gently: "in fact I'm sure he is."

His mother sitting a little distance away turned and caught the frown on his face; she translated it exactly, and her heart throbbed.

"When the first infatuation is gone some of the bitterness must come. She must be robbed of some of her power," was her thought.

As though desirous of escaping the drift the conversation had taken Julian, with some laughing remark, passed out into the sunshine beyond.

Leila went on discussing Giles Bernadine.

"He seems as though he had forgotten all his trouble; he never talks of it, does he, Margot?"

It was Mrs. Bernadine who answered this. She spoke very hurriedly, and there was a coldness and a bitterness in her voice that startled both the girls.

"Giles would have assuredly too much tact to discuss so unpleasant a subject here," she said, and she spoke very distinctly.

Neither Leila nor Margot made an answer to this, and there fell a sort of heaviness upon them which neither could shake off.

The insinuation that ran in Mrs. Bernadine's speech was not in the very least intelligible to them. It gave her, however, the first thrill of satisfaction to see the cloud gather on Leila's face.

Fate (so she would have said) seemed to favour her altogether this morning, for before another quarter of an hour had gone a clue had been given her, given her palpably and clearly, that there was one trouble connected with Leila's past which, if followed up rightly, might most likely afford her some more definite material upon which

to found the ruin her bitter hatred and jealousy had determined should come to the girl's happiness.

It was only a very little thing that gave such a changed aspect to the future of her thoughts, only the mention of a man's name, spoken casually, carelessly by Margot; but to Helen Bernadine's eager eyes, to her quick, suspicious nature, it was enough.

They had gradually drifted back into conversation again.

The two girls, as by some secret accord, eagerly dismissed that cold, unpleasant speech, and Margot, with her rare tact, had wooed Mrs. Bernadine into giving them some more of her Australian experiences.

"Imagine a tropical Christmas Day!" she had cried: "it sounds like a dream. Leila, would you not like to go to Australia?"

Leila shook her head slowly—another time she would have smiled, perhaps, but now she was feeling hurt in a way she could hardly describe, and some of the old nervousness and dread had rushed back into her mind. Mrs. Bernadine's curious words and curious tone of voice had disturbed her very much.

"Why should Giles Bernadine be so careful not to discuss that old trouble here?" she was asking herself in a vague sort of way.

Margot's question, put so brightly, gave her another touch of that old discomfort. She did not understand it, but she felt it. Of late she had grown accustomed to listen to mention of Australia without any discomfort; but this morning somehow all the old miserable horror attached to the word came back to her. She gave a slight shiver.

"No; I have never wanted to go to Australia, Margot," she said, some of the feeling that crowded her breast escaping her involuntarily.

Mrs. Bernadine looked round at this.

"It was your husband's home for many years," she said, and there was a reproach in each separate word, and a resentment too. What right had Leila to object to Australia!

Margot, conscious every moment that something was going very wrong, rushed into the breach gallantly. To herself she confessed she did not quite understand Mrs. Bernadine's manner this morning.

"Oh! she is only talking nonsense. Of course she would love to go over there and see Julian's old home; and after all you have been to Australia you know, Leila, in one sense, and Julian really saw your face for the first time all that way—away! Don't you remember the day you met him first at our house he told you he had seen your photograph in Henry Bartlett's room, and he recognized you at once!"

Leila had grown very cold—very pale.

"Yes, I remember," she said; and at the sound of her voice Mrs. Bernadine looked at her again, and as she looked there was a burst of something like triumph in the feeling that took possession of her.

"Who was this Henry Bartlett, and what place had he in her life? She looks as though she had seen a ghost. I must follow this up. Ah! I knew the day would come when I should find this proud, beautiful, pure Leila could hide some secret in her heart—the daughter of such a man! and married to my boy! Oh! Julian, if you would only have listened to me!"

Already her imagination had run into a fact. It was the first stone in the fabric a woman's foolish hatred was about to build between the son she loved with such selfish love and the woman who was dearer to him than his life!

(To be continued.)

A TEACHER of health culture declares that a simple remedy for removing blood from a too active brain is to exercise the muscles of the feet. Stand firmly on the ground, and then raise the heel, and rest on the toe for a second. Do this a dozen times or so in succession. It will bring an astonishing amount of relief after a hard day's mental work.



"GOOD GRACIOUS!" EXCLAIMED MARGERY FOR THE SECOND TIME.

DR. DURHAM'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Ah, yes," cried Yolande, "I have befooled many men in my time, it is true, and have liked the amusement well enough. Yet, Heaven be my witness, I have never loved but one—never—and that one, Margery Durham, you have stolen from me—"

"I spoke of Sir George Stoke, and—and of others," Margery was insisting indignantly. "Not of—"

But Yolande stopped Margery, in her turn, with a passionate movement of the hands.

"You simpleton," she said, with a faint contemptuous smile, "to lack the wit to discern that my affair with young Stoke was merely a ruse—a ruse from beginning to end!"

"I duped my mother for the sake of peace; I duped Sir George himself for the sake of Lyolph Lynne—as we knew him first. I hoped to make Lyolph jealous by openly encouraging the other; but when I discovered that the weapon, as it were, was a futile one in my hands, I cast it aside, discarded it, and trusted once more to my own individual, unaided resources, which have failed me never until now."

"But everything has gone wrong," she exclaimed, with another wild sob in her breath, "because of you; because of your odious interference, your hateful unlooked-for stepping in between us."

And her hand went up to her bosom and clutched it as if a sharp pain had stabbed her suddenly there.

"Can you, then, wonder that I hate you with an exceeding bitter hatred, Margery?" she continued presently with a long-drawn, shuddering sigh, "seeing that you have robbed my life of all light and of all hope!—when you have humbled my pride as it never was humbled before; and have made me reckless in my thoughts of this

world and of the next—if there be one—as well!"

"If these were times," her low, quivering voice hardening again, "if these were only times such as one has read of, I would have my revenge. I would, Margery. It should be the sole aim of my life to attain it. If I could not wreak it upon you, it should descend in some way upon him; or better still, my vengeance should take a double form, and strike you both at once."

"Such is your great love," put in Margery, with quiet scorn.

Yolande Kildare ignored the remark.

"But what can one do in these prosaic matter-of-fact days," she said mockingly; "when a woman's talk of vengeance is laughed at, ridiculed—when one's hands are tied in such a way, by social restrictions and modern conventionalities, that vengeance, real good, old-fashioned vengeance, becomes a thing well-nigh impossible!"

"Nothing. Forgetfulness of the wrong, the pain, the misery, or whatever the evil may be, is the only remedy at hand; and oblivion, unhappily, will not come at one's bidding."

"The day after to-morrow we go abroad again; my mother says that this wretched business will be more easily forgotten away somewhere than here at home."

"She may please herself, I care not how it is. She talks like a parrot—my misery is beyond her. She is too shallow, too little-minded, too heartless and too selfish ever to have suffered as I have suffered—am suffering now—as I shall continue to suffer until the day of my death."

"However, she is shrewd enough to perceive that I should go mad outright if I were allowed to remain here in the neighbourhood of Foxdale on your wedding-day, Margery, and so is naturally anxious to get me away somewhere or other before it dawn."

"Yes, so far, perhaps, she is wise. When we may meet again I do not know; but—"

"After all that you have thought proper to say to me this evening, Yolande, I think it would

be better for us both if we never met again," interposed Margery Durham coldly. "Henceforward there can be no pretence of friendship between you and me. It is not in my nature to play the hypocrite—it never was."

"You are right," she laughed—and that reckless laugh of Yolande's haunted the memory of Margery for many a day afterwards—"the joke of the situation would be too great, would it not? Well, good-bye now, Margery. Should you ever feel inclined to utter a prayer in my behalf, pray for a speedy termination to my pilgrimage here below. Your prayers and my own conjoined should effect the desired end, I fancy. My life is finished. Once more—farewell."

"Farewell," answered Margery briefly; and went on her solitary way.

She left Yolande standing by the stile, the night deepening around her, the exceeding whiteness of her face showing plainly in the chill purple shadows, with the loose feathery tress of dead-gold hair lying amidst the fur upon her shoulders.

Margery had gone some twenty yards, perhaps more, when the evening wind came lightsomely after her, bearing upon its breath a wailing, heart-breaking sound.

The young girl paused—listened—looked back. Straining her eyes through the gloom, Margery could just distinguish the outline of a woman's figure crouched there upon the damp earth against the rugged step of the stile.

But she could not see the woman's face now. It was bowed and hidden from view.

Shivering, Margery quickened her pace then, almost to a run; but the breeze frolicked after her again with its mournful, heart-broken burthen; and then she heard too the low, plaintive howling of the troubled, faithful dog.

Perhaps, could Margery Durham have only foreseen in what manner, in what circumstances, she and Yolande Kildare would next meet, she—Margery—would have returned straightway to that spot where she had left Yolande, and have

begged her gently not to let the sun go down upon their wrath.

Yes, she knows now that she would have asked Yolande without hesitation to part from her then, at least, as a friend should; albeit in the days to come, perhaps, they might never more be friends again.

But knowing nothing of what the future held in store for either of them, Margery did not go back.

And the sun, concerning whose setting in matters of dissension a peace-loving Maker has solemnly warned mankind, went down upon their mutual strife.

As Yolande had sown, thus was she reaping. And retribution so long delayed was beginning to overtake her at last!

The ridiculous, we all know, trips up frequently the heels of the sublime; the comic incidents of this mortal life of ours are oftentimes met in contiguity with accidents of a tragic birth. There is but a step between the two, as wise men discovered ages ago!

Entering their great parlour at home, deep in thought, and fresh from her bitter leave-taking with Yolande Kildare in the meadows, Margery was something more than considerably astonished at the spectacle which there greeted her eyes. Indeed at first glance she could hardly credit them.

Her own affairs were instantly forgotten—and no wonder!

Breathlessly, involuntarily, she exclaimed "Good gracious!" halting on the threshold with the door-handle in her hand.

The candles were not yet lighted; the dancing, ruddy firelight alone illumined the big room.

There upon the hearth-rug stood Margery's Aunt Susan, already smartened for dinner in her pure shot-silk gown, with one plump hand raised bashfully to her smiling lips, the other imprisoned within the amorous clasp of the Rev. Timothy Price, who, kneeling at her feet, was assuring her of his devotion, and pouring out the story of his middle-aged love!

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Margery for the second time.

Whereupon, hearing her, Mr. Price leaped up from the floor as if he had been shot in the back; whilst Aunt Susan Patchett herself, uttering a scream, threw her hands aloft in dismay.

"Really—I—I beg your pardon, I am sure," stammered Margery, trying not to laugh. "I—I had no idea you were here, Aunt Susan. I thought that the room was of course unoccupied."

But the spry little Vicar of Foxdale quickly regained his wit, smoothing over with his usual gallantry the awkwardness of the situation.

"My dear Miss Margery," quoth he, a courtly bow accompanying the speech, "your charming aunt has done me a great honour this evening. She has promised to become my wife."

"I have promised no such thing," snarled Aunt Susan.

"At any rate, my dear lady," rejoined Mr. Price, "you were just on the point of giving me that promise at the very moment Miss Margery there entered to interrupt us. So it amounts to the same thing in the end, you know."

"Well, I suppose it does," agreed Aunt Susan, blushing modestly.

Truly, mused Margery to herself philosophically, as she went slowly upstairs to take off her out-door things and to don her evening frock, one lived in a world of violent contrasts! Truly the laughter which cropped up now and then, often when one least expected it, was a very fair set-off against the occasional tears!

Who dared say now what might not happen next—since modish hoops had found their way to Foxdale, and Aunt Susan Patchett was to be married again!

Yes, verily, it was a world, thought Margery, of contrast and change.

Four days later, and a crisis arrived in the life of Margery Durham.

Only four days had gone by since an event of extreme importance had happened for Aunt Susan—an event over which Dr. Durham himself

still laughed heartily when he and Margery were alone together—and now an incident of still greater import was about to happen for Dr. Durham's young daughter.

It came to pass in this wise.

The memory of it all, perhaps is about the most vivid of Margery's recollections of the past; and she has many that can never fade.

Her father, on this particular morning, had started from Foxdale a little earlier than usual perhaps, and had been gone some three quarters of an hour when, much to Margery's astonishment—for she had not yet left the breakfast-room, although Aunt Susan herself had been dusting with Molly in the great parlour for the last twenty minutes or so—the young girl saw him returning as fast as he could drive, rattling over the pobbles indeed as if in a terrible hurry.

Dr. Durham came in hastily, speaking himself before Margery could inquire of him whether anything was amiss.

"Margery," he said seriously, "I want you to accompany me back to the Castle—directly, my dear. I am going to wait for you; so make haste."

"To the Castle, daddy?" she said wonderingly. "But Lylph, I thought, was coming here to-day!"

"Well, child, never mind now," her father rejoined, somewhat impatiently; "I'll explain everything to you as we go along. Only make haste, I say. Run upstairs and—Stay, Margery! it would be as well for you to put on a white frock, now you are about it; and then come down here to me."

Wondering more than ever what in the world her good father could be thinking of, to bid her array herself in a white frock on a sunless morning in mid-February—marvelling greatly, too, wherefore he should have returned in such a hurry to fetch her to the Castle, when Lylph himself should rightly have come to her in Foxdale—Margery hastened away upstairs to obey her father without another word of remonstrance.

She found in her wardrobe a white merino gown, which had done duty often at tea-parties at the Johnsons' and elsewhere—it was the first white one she could put her hand upon in that moment of flurry and excitement—and dressed herself quickly in it whilst Dr. Durham waited below.

In addition to her miniver cloak, Margery wrapped a thick shawl around her, for fear of taking cold; and then, thus clad for her unexpected journey, she hurried down to the breakfast-room.

Fortunately, she did not encounter Aunt Susan anywhere, and so escaped all inopportune questions.

Aunt Susan would doubtless have deemed Margery crazy outright, hopelessly so, if she had found the girl shawled and hooded at that early hour of the day, and gowned in the white merino frock, too, that Aunt Susan of course knew so well!

"That's a good little girl," said Dr. Durham kindly, meeting his daughter in the doorway. "Are you quite ready, Margery?"

"Quite ready, daddy," she told him; hardly certain, however, whether she was dreaming or awake.

"Come, then, we will go."

In the hall they ran against open-mouthed Sally.

"Tell your mistress," said Dr. Durham briefly, "that I have taken Miss Margery to the Castle. She is not to be uneasy at her absence."

In the next minute Margery was up in the gig beside her father; and the gray mare, getting her head, was off for the second time that morning.

How little then did Margery Durham dream that she was turning her back for ever on the dear old happy home where, so far, the whole of her life had been passed!

"Father," she said timidly, nestling close to his side, "what does it all mean? Will not you tell me, father?"

Then, holding the reins firmly in one hand, Dr. Durham placed his arm lovingly around the muffled figure of Margery.

"Nothing very terrible, my darling," he answered gently. "The Earl, we find, is sinking fast—cannot possibly last much longer; a few hours at the most; and—and, Margery, dear, you know—"

"Yes, dear father!" she put in, as he hesitated, beginning to tremble in spite of herself.

"He desires to see you Lylph's wife before he dies. You will not disappoint the poor Earl, my child!" questioned her father earnestly; "you will help him to die in peace!"

Margery drew a deep, deep breath. She trembled now from head to foot.

"No, no, no—I could not disappoint him in such an hour. I—I am glad if he wishes it," breathed Margery. "But, oh, father dear, it is all very sudden!"

"Take heart and courage, my brave little lass," said Dr. Durham, the loving pressure of his arm tightening around Margery. "Do what we will, we cannot save the poor Earl; but it is for you and Lylph together to give happiness and content to his last moments on earth. Courage, my darling—courage, I say!"

And then Margery learned that her father—on calling at Foxdale Castle the first thing that morning, such having been his custom lately; that is to say, since Lord Beaumanoir had shown symptoms of a more rapid decline—had been met by Lady Anne Guest in poignant distress, so that he read the mournful tidings in her pale worn face.

Lord Beaumanoir, she said, had passed a wretched night, sleeping fitfully, suffering much; and in the early morning he had told his son Edenbridge what Lylph, indeed could do so well for himself—that the pain and the sorrow would soon be ended, perhaps before the closing of that sad day.

Then the Earl, very weakly, spoke of that longing which lay nearest his sick heart; and Edenbridge at once, in his prompt, tender way, had promised his father that the cherished wish should no longer remain unfulfilled—that it should, in fact, with the consent of the woman he loved, be carried out and satisfied without further delay.

Hearing all this, then, from the lips of Lady Anne, Dr. Durham had driven post-haste back to Foxdale to fetch his daughter Margery; Lady Anne Guest herself, at the same time, despatching a groom to Revelstoke to summon thence a clergyman—a very old and respected friend of hers—who was to bring with him the necessary license for the ceremony.

The Rev. Timothy Price, Margery remembered, was no favourite with Lady Anne, and went rarely to the Castle; hence the letter and journey to the neighbouring parish of Revelstoke.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"FATHER" said Margery, very sadly, by-and-by, as the distance between them and the great dull-looking house upon the hill-side grew less and less with each quick stride of the willing gray mare—"father, the Earl, I thought, seemed better and brighter when I was with him yesterday! I was beginning to hope, you know, that with the spring he might—be might—"

"He knew, my darling—it was best that he should know," Dr. Durham answered, "that he would not live to see the violets. His great joy at finding his son Lylph wrought wonders for him, of course, at the time; but a reaction, you see, was inevitable, and his shattered health, in reality, soon became worse than ever."

The fresh wind, chilly and sweet with moist, woody smells, was full in the faces of the doctor and his daughter; the sun, as they turned in at the open lodge-gates, was just beginning to pierce the low mists overhead.

A lark, invisible to the eye, was trilling its keen high above the quiet brown fields.

Margery's eyes filled, her heart ached.

How sad, she was thinking, it must be to die when the primroses and the violets were budding under their leaves and moss, and when all the world was looking forward to the young sweet loveliness of the early spring!

And this was to be Margery's wedding-day! Her wedding-day!

Well, it was scarcely the one, or the kind of one, that she had so often lived through in her day-dreams; it was scarcely the way in which she had fancied she would go to her husband and her husband's home, when the hour should arrive for the forsaking of her father's roof for the shelter of Foxdale Castle!

Margery was to be married; and the Earl was to die!

Yes, Life and Death, as they so often do, were meeting and jostling each other!

Her father, Margery Durham recollected afterwards, even spoke to her of ordinary, everyday affairs as they mounted the steep avenue to the Castle.

His aim doubtless was to cheer her and to interest her—to help her to forget, perhaps, if only for a little while, the ordeal which was awaiting her in the great house on the hill.

"The Kildares, I hear," Dr. Durham remarked, "are gone abroad again."

"Yes, daddy," answered Margery absently.

"What terrible gossamers they are, Margery, are they not?" said the doctor thoughtfully.

"Yes, indeed, daddy," replied Margery again.

"They are gone off to the South of France somewhere this time, I believe. I wonder what fresh mischief Miss Yolande will get up to there!" speculated Margery's father.

"Perhaps she will marry a Frenchman, after all—a needy, out-at-elbows sort of fellow, you know, Margery, with a grand handle to a crack-jaw name, and a pedigree as long as to-day and to-morrow; oh, my little girl!"

Margery answered nothing to this—merely sighed unconsciously in reply; for indeed she had barely understood a word her father had said.

And so Dr. Durham left his young daughter in peace.

Lady Anne and Lord Edenbridge together met them in the great quiet hall; and Margery heard them telling her father that the Earl, weak as he was, would insist upon rising from, nay, had already left his bed, so that he might be present at the reading of the marriage-service.

Then Margery felt Lady Anne's pale, sweet face touching her own; and the young girl managed to smile back into those worn and sorrowful wet eyes that were so tenderly gazing into Margery's.

And then Lord Edenbridge, putting his arm protectively through his young bride's, soothing thus her nervous tremors as no one else in the world could have soothed them, led her forthwith into the silent and shadowy library, where everything that was requisite had been got ready for their wedding.

"It is to be here," he whispered. "My dear, do you do not mind?"

She looked at him with perfect trust.

"No, Lylph. There is nothing on earth that I would not do to please you. Love, you know best," she said.

Soon arrived at the Castle the Revelstoke clergyman, a benign-looking old man with abundant silvery locks, and shortly afterwards they were all assembled in the library; the dying Earl, seated in their midst in his own invalid-chair, and listening with bent head and thin white clasped hands to those solemn words which were making Margery Durham and Lylph Viscount Edenbridge man and wife—to be separated never more so long as they both should live!

When the Earl first saw Margery in her white merino gown, he cried over her hand as he held it, and kissed her on either cheek as her own father might have done; but his eyes were dry now, and there was a look of peace upon his face.

The mid-day sunshine shone palely over the windows, lighting up the hallowed scene and the portrait above the mantel-piece.

Margery's hand was duly placed in the hand of her lover; the plain, broad gold ring which had belonged to Lylph's mother was slipped on her finger; the quiet last sentence of the marriage service was read; and, before the library clock

had struck its twelve slow strokes, Margery Durham was in truth the wife of Lord Edenbridge.

It was the afternoon.

A clear and cloudless afternoon with a savour of real spring in the air.

Very simple and quiet, of course, had been the "wedding-breakfast," as Lady Anne, with her dim and sorrowful little smile, called the somewhat hurriedly prepared mid-day meal; though, to humour the poor Earl, the health of the bride and bridegroom had been duly drunk, and with more earnestness and solemnity, perhaps, than are customary on such occasions, in a rare old wine from the Castle cellars, which Lord Beaumanoir had had brought up from its distant and darksome bin in honour of this memorable day.

And now the gentle old clergyman was gone back to his paragon at Revelstoke; and Dr. Durham himself must be going likewise.

Patients were awaiting his coming elsewhere. For what good, alas! could be done by his lingering at Foxdale Castle—all that mortal man and his skill could do there, John Durham had done faithfully long ago.

It was no earthly physician that would heal the sick Earl now, Margery's father knew well enough.

He could stay Death's icy hand, perhaps, in other quarters, but not here.

Therefore, obedient to the call of duty, Dr. Durham must go.

"Well, good-bye, my tried old friend!" Lord Beaumanoir said, in a low and broken voice, holding the doctor's strong kind hand within his two feeble blue veined ones. "I shall not try to thank you again—for all that you have done both for me and mine. I could not do it, because there are no new words for such friendship as yours. Heaven bless you always, Durham! This will be a long good-bye!"

Margery's father looked down on the gray head with all the tenderness of a woman in his kindly eyes.

"Only until to-morrow, you know," he answered cheerily. "I shall come up as usual to see you to-morrow."

"Ah, yes, you will see me, I suppose," Lord Beaumanoir said; "but—this, nevertheless, is a long good-bye, my friend!"

Dr. Durham did not appear to notice the pathetic iteration, but held fast the Earl's hand in a touching silence, which to those around, noting it, was more eloquent than any speech, and then departed.

Margery, Lady Edenbridge, did not see her father's face as he went out from the Earl's presence.

They were all with him, now, in the garden parlour—Lady Anne, Lylph, and Margery—doing their best to remain watchful and calm; fighting as bravely as they could their "climbing sorrow."

They thought the Earl was dozing, he lay there so still in his chair.

"Edenbridge," he said, presently, quite suddenly.

"Yes, father; I am here."

"You have forgiven me for—for you know—you understand? Tell me so again, Edenbridge."

Lord Edenbridge bent over his father in an agony of grief.

"Hush, hush!" he entreated. "Don't speak of it, father! Don't think of it. It was done with long ago."

"And your poor ill-used mother, Edenbridge," the Earl continued dreamily—"Griseida Lyane—no, no, I mean, Griseida Countess of Beaumanoir! Did you tell me once that she likewise had forgiven me? She had a great deal to forgive, Edenbridge. . . . Much to forgive, poor soul, Heaven help her . . ."

"Yes—yes, I told you that; and it was the truth," Lylph answered hoarsely. Then he added quickly,

"Father, let me get you your medicine—you would take it now, would you not?"

"Ah no, dear lad, I came the weak response, 'I do not want it—I could not swallow it. Is that Griseida Lyane,' he went on faintly and

wonderingly, "sitting there in the corner, just where the sunlight is falling!"

"Has she been singing at the concert in that white gown!—her gowns were always white—as white as the soul within her. Tell her not to cry . . . it breaks my heart to see her cry, Edenbridge."

"That is Margery, father," Lord Edenbridge said soothingly, with difficulty controlling his voice. "Do not you know her! Margery Durham that was—my dear wife that is now, and therefore your daughter. She it was who—"

"Of course, my son," the Earl interrupted softly, a ray of intelligence just flickering over his changing features, "I recollect. Margery Durham—John Durham's daughter—yes, I remember her—remember her now perfectly. Is it not she, Edenbridge, who has brought back to us Field-fare Farm, Barton Rise—my beautiful Barton Rise—and Little Slingford Court, whose fortune will so easily clear off the mortgage upon the other land, so that—the poor old house will get its own again, and be able to hold up its head in the western shires once more, as high as ever it did, Edenbridge, you know, thirty years ago! I am not deceived, lad, am I?"

"No, no, father," Lord Edenbridge assured him earnestly. "All that for us is Margery going to do. Rather may we not say, in fact, that she has done it for us already? For do you not remember that you witnessed our marriage, only a little while ago, in the library this morning?"

"Yes, I remember," said the Earl wearily—"Heaven bless her!"

His eyes closed again.

The room was very still.

A robin, perched on a weather-beaten stone vase which stood upon the terrace edge outside, was piping sweetly and blithely to the pale home-travelling sun. There were spriest streaks in the chilly sky now.

Lady Anne's stifled sobs, which shook her and seemed to rend her from head to foot whenever they mastered her self-control, alone broke the stillness which reigned there in the garden parlour.

Half-an-hour passed—half-an-hour that, in its awful hush, seemed like years almost—before the Earl's gray lips moved once more.

"Anne, Anne!" he cried, half-raising himself from his cushions, and then sinking back to them exhausted.

But Lady Anne was at his side ere the echo of her name was gone.

"Dear, I am here—Raoul—brother—I am with you," she whispered lovingly, her whole soul in her drowned, choked voice. "See"—kneeling by him, and very tenderly folding in her own cold moist fingers that were wandering over his knee, her streaming eyes upturned to those now almost sightless ones above her—"see, Raoul, this is my hand, dear, upon yours; this is my kiss, dear, do you feel it? There—so!"

And she kissed and wept upon the cold white hands, which their relentless and unbidden marriage-guest was holding firmly likewise, to lead the tired pilgrim away from earth into the dread presence of the Master who had sent that wan guest thither.

For even Death, we should remember always, cruel and powerful as he is, is not his own master—in yet not omnipotent.

There is still a Warrior of infinite strength more mighty and merciful than he!

Then it seemed to Margery all at once that she was not wanted there in the garden-parlour in this supreme hour.

And so she rose to steal away as noiselessly as she could move, when Lord Edenbridge looked up quickly with a glance that arrested her on the spot.

"Are not you one of us—you belong to us now!" his eyes seemed to say to her in loving reproach. "Margery, why should you go?"

And so there Margery remained.

"I want to feel the light—the light and the air," the Earl was saying yet more faintly. "I—I want to look upon the earth again. But it has become so dark, my poor old loving patient Anne! I cannot see the sun—nor the trees—nor any of you! It has all grown so dark—so dark! So cold, dear Edenbridge—so very cold!"

They fastened back the heavy curtains, and opened wide the long glass-doors which formed the window as well.

The cool fresh breath of early spring swept up with a soft rush from the lifeless valley and over the chocolate-tinted woods.

It fanned the massive fringe above the sweeping crimson curtains. It played wooingly with the damp gray hair that lay upon the dying Earl's brow.

His mind now was no longer clouded.

He knew quite well that his own kindred were near and around him.

And thus gathered about his chair, with the new spring air breathing freshly in upon them, they watched him go forth from their sorrowing midst—restfully leaning, as it were, on the "broad sweet bosom of Death"—on his journey into the Silent Land:

"In the glory of the sunset,
In the purple mists of evening."

"Though I walk . . . though I walk through the valley of . . . of the shadow of death," spoke the weak, low, failing voice, "I . . . I will fear no evil . . . For Thou art with me . . . Thy rod . . . Thy rod and Thy staff . . ."

But the end of that sweet trustful verse, let us hope, was whispered at the foot of the Great White Throne.

For the Earl had knocked and was waiting at:

"The golden gates
Which separate Earth from Heaven!"

(To be continued.)

HELEN'S DILEMMA.

—30—

CHAPTER XXVII.

"HULLO, where on earth have you been!" said Sir Rupert's companion, suddenly appearing and giving him a pretext to release himself at last. "What in the world became of you? You missed a treat, I can tell you."

Then suddenly struck by his companion's gravity and pallor, he said,—

"You were not ill, were you? You look rather seedy."

"I felt the place rather warm—the gas, you know, and I just went outside to get a breath of fresh air."

"Well, you missed Albany's last solo. It was splendid; and you missed more than that! I went round to old Towers' box between the acts, and got introduced to the heiress. Ah, ha, my boy! and if you had been with me you would have been presented too."

At this pleasant prospect Sir Rupert could not refrain from an involuntary shudder.

"She's even better-looking than you'd think," proceeded his loquacious companion, lighting a cigar. "She stands looking into, which is more than you can say for a lot of girls—all so frightfully made up; but there's no deception about her, I can tell you. Such a skin—like alabaster, such a pair of eyes, such a pretty little mouth."

Sir Rupert winced.

It revolted him to the very depths of his soul to hear this outspoken, coarse-minded friend of his appraising Helen's charms.

"By George! I think I'll enter for the stakes myself, eh! A clear course, and no favour, now the lover is done for. I don't suppose she would ever look at him again. What do you say?"

His companion made no direct reply, but halting a hansom, said, as he put his hand on the door,—

"Well, good-night, Stratton. I suppose I can't drop you anywhere, can I?"

"Are you not coming on to the club?" cried his friend, aghast.

"No, no," impatiently. "Good-night."

"What the deuce is up with the fellow?" said Mr. Stratton to himself as he puffed angrily at his cigar, and walked along briskly in the direc-

tion of Pall-mall. "Can't make it out! Can't make head or tail of him," removing his cheeocot and surveying it with indignant interrogation. "Bolts out of the theatre—heat—all stuff. Looks as if he had seen a ghost. Some one in the house of course—but who? Always a reserved cover—close about his affairs. Heavens! slapping his leg exultingly. 'I have it! Yes, I have it, or my name's not Tom Stratton. He is the lover, by George. It was down near his place she had a situation. It was after he saw her he was struck dumb. No wonder. Small blame to him. And she—she looked a little bit queer, too, now I come to think of it, when I mentioned that I was with an old school-fellow—a Sir Rupert Lynn! Oh, I say. Won't this be a fine story for Bob Sladen."

But after some reflection it dawned upon Mr. Stratton that he had better keep his discovery to himself.

Recollections forced themselves into his mind—recollections of other days, when Rupert Lynn, although a most loyal friend and popular comrade, resented very decidedly any idle interference with what he was pleased to consider his own private affairs.

No! no! For the present he would keep his own counsel, and let events unfold themselves as they pleased.

And what about Sir Rupert! His reflections were not of the pleasantest, as he divested himself of his dress coat, got into a shooting-jacket, and throwing himself into an arm-chair opposite his fire, proceeded to light a cigar, that universal soothe of men's ruffled feelings, and to face the situation.

To judge by Helen's demeanour—by her look of frozen indifference, of total lack of recognition, as far as he was concerned—there was "no appeal." Why, she did not even change colour, or betray that she had ever set eyes on him before by so much as the flickering of an eye-lash.

What marvellous self-possession! Who that knew her as he had done would have believed that no marble statue could be colder or more composed when occasion required! (He was not aware that she had seen him from her box, that she had steeled herself to the meeting, and had been well prepared for that accidental *rencontre*.) Would she ever forgive him, or had she banished him entirely from her heart and thoughts! Should he write to her! Should he endeavour to obtain Katie's good offices on his behalf! What should he do!

For several days he could not come to any distinct conclusion. It drove him nearly frantic to hear other men discussing "the fair Helen," as they called her; to listen to them weighing the pros and cons; the chances for, and against this and that rival suitor; to hear them laughing and chaffing, these supposed aspirants, before his very face; it was simply maddening.

No wonder fellows at the club began to say among themselves that Lynn had a deuce of a temper, and that he could be more sarcastic when he liked than Rousby; and that was saying a good deal! What the mischief had come over him; he used to be such a cheery chap; it was not money; it was not a woman; he never bothered his head about them! What was it!

It was some satisfaction to Sir Rupert to know by hearsay, at any rate, that his place had not been filled as yet. The beauty was hard to please. She laughed at sentimental speeches—snubbed the too confident of her adoring circle.

If he dared to think that it was on account of a dim lingering regard for him, how happy it would make him. But no! no! he dared not lay that flattering unction to his soul. He was not so mad as all that!

He had seen her several times since. Once in the park reclining under a white lace parasol in a superbly appointed landau, along with a benevolent-looking old lady. There had been a block among the carriages close to him, and their eyes had met—this time a faintly perceptible flood of pink had dyed her cheeks; but her eyes gave no sign. She turned them away at once and looked straight before her, presenting nothing but a haughty, rigid, little profile to his gaze.

Another time he had seen her at a grand ball—the belle of the evening—besieged with part-

ners, and he had held aloof and afar off, with wild, angry, bitter thoughts in his mind. Alas! who could he blame but himself! He had to thank no one but himself that he stood in the background—a stranger, instead of being as he once was, the happy man to whom all her dances, her pretty looks and gay smiles belonged.

He met her once more at the Academy, escorted from picture to picture by Tavy Leeborough—gladly, oh! gladly would he wring Tavy's neck—and herself attracting as much notice from the crowd of fashionables as any painting there.

Tavy's chances had been spoken of with some favour; his mother was backing him, and so were the heiress's people. Tavy was a young man who had a very sincere appreciation of his own merits, and thought it by no means beneath his deserts to be escorting the prettiest girl in London, and to be the envid of all (male) beholders. Tavy was an excellent specimen of the *petit crêpe* of Paris—the "masher" of London—the modern Maccaroni or Blood. He loved the theatre, he delighted in dress. His mission was to stand about in attitudes and be admired. He liked champagne suppers, he liked the society of his fellow-mashers, he liked his liberty—but his debts were pressing—he would not mind renouncing his freedom in favour of Miss Brown. Yes, there would be a certain *kudos* in walking off with the heiress, just under the noses of half-a-dozen other fellows. With the water to back him he had a first-class chance.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BLANCHE DESPARD had been a true prophet when she had declared to her mother that "Katie would bring her round."

Alluding to her cousin Helen, the bringing round had been a much more difficult and delicate manoeuvre than she anticipated; for Helen could not compel herself to think of her aunt and her eldest cousin without feelings of intense repulsion.

Nevertheless a truce was made, the hatchet was buried, and peace ultimately proclaimed.

Katie's lameness had been getting worse and worse, and she had been brought up to London to be placed under the care of a famous surgeon. On one of her days with him she had called at Mrs. Towers, and had had a long, confidential talk with her friend in the back drawing-room.

Helen was inexpressibly touched by her wan, little face—sharpened and pinched with wearying and constant pain.

She saw a great difference in her cousin since the days they used to ramble about the woods of Cargew together, and she used to keep up with Loo-Loo and herself with the greatest ease—using her stick with great effect. Now, although it had been changed for a crutch, she could hardly drag herself across a room.

"You will have to come and see me, Helen," she said, nodding her head emphatically.

"Dearest Katie, I could not—it would be impossible," returned Helen, colouring warmly.

"And why is it impossible! Why, of course, it is because of mother and Blanche. But you will have to make up and forgive them, sooner or later. You see we really are your own relations, though no one would have imagined it to be the case, judging from the warm reception we gave you," with a bitter little laugh.

"I think friends do as well as relatives, if not better," said Helen, "and you were always my friend, and always will be."

"And you will have to come and see me, for I can't come and see you any more," returned Katie, with decision.

"Not any more! and why not!" cried her cousin, in dismay.

"Because Dr. White thinks that nothing will do me any good until I have had a complete rest. I am to 'lie up' as he calls it, and not move for the next three months. Fancy three months in bed, with my leg in a kind of iron cage."

"Poor Kitty, how dreadful for you."

"Yes—it is not a pleasant prospect, is it?" shrugging her shoulders. "And this is positively my last appearance, so I came to tell you all about it, and beg you—yes, beg you, dearest

Helen—for my sake, to let bygones be bygones with the matter and Blanche. I know I am asking a great deal, and it is more than half pure selfishness on my part; but think of me lying up there in that horrible back room for the next three months, hardly seeing a soul, with little to do but study the pattern of the paper on the wall; for I am not to use my arms, not to write nor work; and imagine what a boon your visits would be, dear Helen. I may not be with you long," laying her hand on her arm, and looking into her face with wistful eyes.

"Nonsense, Kitty! you must not say such things," said her companion, impetuously. "I won't listen to you; but as you seem to wish it so very much, and for your sake only, remember, I will try and bring myself to meet your mother, but with this understanding, that we meet for the first time now as absolute strangers. There never was such a person as Miss Helen Brown, the governess. I insist on this being thoroughly understood."

"I am sure it is awfully good of you, Helen; and you may be very sure that mother and Blanche will be only too delighted to fall in with that view of the case; it will not be nearly so awkward for them."

"Then we will make a new departure," continued Helen, rising and pacing the room. "Your mother can come here and see her niece, the rich heiress, who has just arrived in this country with her friends Mr. and Mrs. Towers, and we will have no unpleasant allusions to a former acquaintance. I leave the entire matter in your hands; it is your affair. I am bringing myself to a forgiving frame of mind entirely for your sake."

It will hardly be necessary to add that Mrs. Despard eagerly clutched at the olive branch extended by her rich niece, and lost no time in making a formal call, in the character of an affectionate aunt!

On the safe and happy neutral topic of Helen's late father Mrs. Despard held forth with sisterly eloquence.

To listen to her now, he was dearer to her than brother had ever been to sister since the creation of the world; and all her devotion for him she was ready to transfer at a moment's notice to his daughter, her dear niece.

Miss Blanche contented herself with maintaining a smiling, sympathetic silence; her active little brain was already weaving many schemes on behalf of her lovely cousin.

In the first place, Blanche intended to eat a certain quantity of that very unappetising morsel "humble pie;" then she would take her newly-found relative to her bosom and adopt her as her dearest, most confidential, and cherished friend. This would naturally be mutual—for Helen seemed an impulsive, simple-minded girl, easily amused, easily angered, easily appeased, and very backward in knowing the ways of the world.

She—Blanche—would gain her entire confidence, find out her feelings with regard to Rupert, and strain every nerve to keep them apart; the armistice, much less treaty of peace, must on no account extend to him.

These are a few of the ideas that were passing through Miss Despard's mind as she sat in Mrs. Towers's drawing-room, occasionally glancing at her mother and cousin, and drawing an elaborate pattern on the carpet with the tip of her parasol.

To a certain extent she was enabled to carry out her schemes.

Helen was a constant visitor in Cadogan-crescent; her visits were intended for Katie, to whom she brought quantities of the most lovely flowers, fruits, all the new papers, magazines, and books; but naturally she frequently encountered other members of the family, and was drawn into teas, dinners, and drives.

Sir Rupert's face of unqualified amazement the first day he beheld Helen occupying a seat in the Despard landau was beyond description.

He could hardly trust his eyes as he saw Helen and her aunt rapidly rolling down Bond-street, evidently engaged in the most friendly conversation.

He was standing in a shopdoor, unseen by

both. What did it mean? If she had forgiven her relatives, would she not also pardon him?

The very idea sent a glow through his veins, and he walked off rapidly to Cadogan-crescent, in the hopes of finding Blanche at home, and sounding her on the subject.

"Yes, Miss Despard was in the drawing-room," the servant informed him, and in another moment he and the perfidious Blanche were face to face.

"Come to have tea with me, Rupert? How nice of you!" she cried, extending both hands.

"Simmons,"—turning to the footman—"tea!" That was not precisely the object of her cousin's visit, but he was unprepared to dispute the question, and gracefully accepted the situation.

They talked round the subject that both knew must, ere long, come on the tapis; for some time discoursed of the theatres—French plays and the opera—criticised some costumes at a recent ball, and "cut up" a new book.

At length Sir Rupert broke the ice by saying,—

"Your mother is not at home, is she?"

"No. In fact," pausing, cream-jug in hand, "she has gone to an horticultural fête with Helen," she added, impressively.

"Indeed!" replied her cousin, still stirring his tea slowly, and without raising his eyes. "Then you have all made it up!—have you?"

"Yes—entirely. We are now the best of friends!" emphatically.

"How very pleasant for you. I wonder if—if—Miss Brown intends to extend her forgiveness any further?"

"It was all her own fault from first to last!" returned Blanche, totally ignoring his broad hint. "What business had she to come to us under false pretences—trying to take us unawares—masquerading as a governess!"

"She did succeed in taking you unawares, with a vengeance!" said Sir Rupert, looking full into his companion's eyes.

"Yes," colouring slightly, "she certainly did; and you too!"—spitefully. "She will never forgive you!" she added, triumphantly.

"And pray why not? Why should I be more under the ban than others?" he asked, quickly.

"Oh!" airily waving her hand; "you see we are her cousins—her own nearest and only blood relations. She could not go on keeping up a feud with us; and she is so fond of Katie! But you—" and she paused.

"Yes, and I!" he asked, with a touch of defiance in his tone.

"A woman can forgive her own sex sooner than she can a man, especially a lover, who casts her off and disowns her!" Sir Rupert winced.

"She is terribly proud, and was awfully delighted to have won the affections of a baronet under the guise of a pauper. She liked the idea of being loved for herself alone, and trusted in to any extent; and it seems that you shattered all these happy notions rather rudely!" concluded Blanche, with a smiling nod.

"It is quite true. The truth seemed too hard—too impossible to credit. It was not because she was a poor governess I cast her off, as you called it, for I had never known her to be otherwise. It was because I believed her to be another man's wife. Could you not help me to obtain a hearing, Blanche, to beg her forgiveness?" drawing his chair a little closer, and looking at her pleadingly.

"No, it would be useless!" cried Blanche, very sharply. "I know from what she has said from time to time, that all love or liking for you has entirely died away; that she never wishes to see you, or to speak to you again; that were you to bumble yourself to the very dust, she would spurn you, as you spurned her! I am telling you the truth," added Blanche (who certainly lied courageously, and well), raising her light, steely eyes to those of the unhappy young man at the opposite side of the little tea-table.

There was not a blush on her cheek, not a quiver of an eyelash. She must be telling the truth, thought her companion, and he was the more inclined to believe her when he mentally

beheld Helen's cold, haughty impassive appearance each time that they had met.

"I wish to spare your feelings as much as possible," proceeded Blanche, affectionately, who perceived with inward triumph, that her plan was working well. "There is no need for you to humiliate yourself unnecessarily; and I may as well tell you in confidence, that it is all but settled that Helen is to marry Lord Leaborough."

"So I have heard," replied her cousin, at last forcing himself to speak; "but I never believed it. Tavy Leaborough is a needy, useless young fool, and not fit to wipe her shoes."

"Oh, not such a fool as he looks, by any means," returned Blanche, with engaging confidence. "He has a title, she has money. It is just what the *chaperones* call a most suitable match."

"It is nothing but vile exchange and barter, and maddening to think of," said Rupert angrily, searching for his gloves and hat.

"Well, Rue," said his cousin, standing up to say good-bye and holding out her hand; "I am sorry for you—very—but it will be all the same a hundred years hence. Console yourself with that reflection."

"Not much consolation in that," he answered, "but all the same I'll try and see her, and speak to her again. Yes! I will, Blanche, I can't let my whole life go by the board without one struggle. It may be no use, very likely I shall fail; but you know the lines,—

'He either fears his fate too much
Or his deserts are small,
Who fears to put it to the touch,
To win—or lose it all!'

"The idiot," cried Blanche, with a stamp of her foot, as the door closed on her cousin. "Idiot, besotted idiot! However, he won't be warned, and must take the consequences, and I shall make them exceedingly unpleasant. Yes, I shall," addressing a fat pug that lay coiled up in a low arm-chair. "I shall work upon her feelings, and if she does not mount the high horse, and give him his *congé* once for all—my name is not Blanche Despard."

Sir Rupert was unshaken in his resolve to see and speak with his late fiancée—although he had small hopes of success.

He saw her the day after his visit to Cadogan-crescent walking in the Row with Lord Leaborough; whilst Mrs. Towers, and another lady, complacently brought up the rear.

Tavy Leaborough was got up with enormous care in a sad-coloured suit, very high collar, and very pointed patent leather boots; and was bending down to the white parasol beside him with an air of intimate friendliness that made Sir Rupert's heart burn like fire within him; for the pretty white parasol seemed to laugh, and to head, and to listen, with complacency to empty-headed Tavy's small confidences and compliments.

CHAPTER XXIX.

It seemed the very irony of fate, that their deadly enemy (had they but known it) was the only possible link between Helen and Rupert.

An enemy to Helen, with a hatred born of envy, and the feeling one woman naturally experiences towards another who has robbed her of her lover.

An enemy to Rupert, in that she was resolved to stand between him and the fulfilment of his dearest hopes; and, as far as he was personally concerned, her bosom was torn between two maddening passions—love and hatred.

Had Katie been as formerly she would have been a ready and gracious "go-between" confidante and peace-maker, and readily healed the rift between her cousins; but Katie was lost to all social life and interests, and spent her days and nights in an agony of racking pain.

Rupert had cast his thoughts to Loo-Loo, but at once abandoned the idea as preposterous. How could he bring himself to pour his joys and sorrows into the ear of that volatile and mischievous monkey?

Mrs. Despard would be decidedly unsympathetic; Mrs. Towers and Helen's new friends he did not know.

There was no one for him to turn to except Blanche, and with what a very discouraging result we have just seen.

Helen, on her part, was only too ready to bury the past, and accord her free forgiveness to her late betrothed—weighing everything in her mind—softened now by the ease of her own surroundings; she was prepared to make just allowance for his want of confidence.

At first she had hardened herself, and her views on the subject of his complete submission were on a very large scale; but as day after day went by and still he held aloof, and showed no symptoms of penitence, nor any desire to return to his former allegiance, her heart died within her.

She would now be content with a very moderate amount of humiliation, and was perfectly ready—nay, eager to meet him half-way—but surely he could not expect the first advances to come from her.

Vainly had she struggled to forget him, to live in a whirl of abstracting gaities, to give herself no time for thought, and to endeavour to feel some interest in the existence of other men.

It was quite useless; she mere fact of catching a sudden glimpse of him in the Row—of seeing the back of his head in a theatre—increased her pulses and colour in a very perceptible degree.

"There was no one like him," she declared to herself. Not one among the myriad admirers of her present palmy days was half so pleasing to her eyes and fancy as the lover who had cast her off with contumely and contempt.

The breach between them seemed daily widening; his name was never mentioned in her aunt's house, and his friends were apparently not her friends. Perhaps he was too overwhelmed with regret and confusion to venture to approach her—thus whispered hope, who ever told a flattering tale!

Perhaps, as Mahomed was not inclined to come to the mountain, the mountain had better exert herself; and with this idea fresh in her mind she suddenly opened the subject to her cousin Blanche, who was the most affectionate and sympathetic of girls.

Blanche was spending the afternoon with her, and engaged in the congenial task of turning over and criticising the latest additions to Helen's wardrobe. Two or three lovely gowns lay on the bed and were undergoing a searching inspection, whilst their owner sat in a low chair at an open window, looking out ostensibly at some Italian fingers, but, in reality, making up her mind to speak on the all-absorbing topic, and trying to bring her courage to the sticking point.

"I must say Madame Panier has an awfully good cut!" said Blanche, breaking the silence. "I don't know anyone that puts in a sleeve as well as she does!" How much did she charge you for this blue dress, Helen?"

"Oh!" returned Helen, dreamily, "the blue one, I'm not quite sure; it was not very outrageous, I know." By-the-way, Blanche, avoiding her cousin's all-searching, grey eyes, "do you ever see anything of your cousin Rupert now?"

"Rupert!" echoed Blanche, in a key of animated surprise. "Oh, yes I see him often. But why do you ask?" she concluded, with biting emphasis.

"Oh! merely because we were such friends once, and—and," stammering pitifully, "I thought perhaps he would have liked to renew our acquaintance now that I am established as a sort of connection—a cousin's cousin," with a miserable attempt at mirth.

"So you are," cried Blanche, sitting down on an ottoman, and making up her mind to disabuse her companion's mind of any lingering tendresse in the direction of the gentleman in question. "I dare say it seems odd that you have never met, but I believe I know the reason that Rupert avoids you so persistently!"

"Avoids me!" repeated Helen, with rising colour.

"Yes, dear. To be quite frank with you, he shies from you like the plague. He feels that he, like all of us, behaved miserably! It does not

bear to be spoken about—and, indeed, it did not; and, to tell you the truth, though you would never have guessed it, Rupert is a little tiny bit narrow-minded, and cannot endure to feel small. Every time he sees you, you remind him of an unpleasant event in the past—an event which he is trying to forget as fast as ever he can, in the society of Miss Ring!"

"And who is Miss Ring?" asked Helen, in a low voice, and with averted eyes.

"She is a girl that is rather fast, and not a bit what you would call his style; but she has lots of money—a *nouveau riche*; and not at all averse to being Lady Lynn! Rupert paid her no end of attention last season. Then came his little interlude with you; and now he is making the running again at such a pace that there will be a wedding at St. George's before we know where we are!"

"Really!" said Helen, making a valiant attempt to steady her voice; "I don't think I know her appearance. What is she like?"

"Oh! she *thinks* she is like Lady Dudley, but she is no more like her than I am! She is well turned out, wears a tremendous fringe, has a pair of very sharp dark eyes, and a fearfully squeezed-in waist! You may have seen her riding in the park. She wears a green habit, and rides a bright, bay horse, with white stockings. She is very noisy, and you can hear her laughing half-a-mile off!"

Yes, Helen recognised the young lady now by this flattering description. She was the girl she had seen talking to Rupert in the lobby of the opera house, a girl with bare shoulders and bold eyes. She had seen her more than once riding with him in the Row.

Jealousy and mistrust are fires that kindle speedily when blown by the bellows of neglect, and lighted by the match of indignation.

Helen felt her pride come to her aid as she drew up her long white throat and turned to her cousin, who was leaning back with her head resting against the bottom of the bed, and watching with half-closed, malicious eyes, the effect of the missile she had launched—a rival!

"And when is the wedding to be?" asked Helen, with much composure.

"Oh! I really don't know that anything is positively fixed! I should not wonder if it was postponed till after Rupert's return. He talks of going on an expedition—a shooting trip to South America—with his friend, Captain Torrens."

"I suppose you will all be very glad when he is married and settled down near you for life," remarked Helen, dealing an unintentional but smarting wound in her turn.

"Yes!" replied Blanche, with a swift, suspicious glance; "it is really quite time for him to give up wandering about the world, especially now that he is tolerably well off, and can afford to inhabit his ancestral halls. It is really a sin to see Cargow shut up. I dare say, if you particularly wished it and made a point of it, he would come and pay you a visit!" she added, slowly.

"Shall I sound him?" she asked, confidentially.

"On no account!" cried Helen, springing to her feet.

That Blanche should offer in this patronising manner to bring her recalcitrant lover reluctantly into her presence was an idea that was more galling than could be described.

"Why not? He can only say no!" continued Miss Despard, encouragingly.

"For many reasons," returned Helen, who was leaning against the window (and leaning out, and seeing nothing), with hot anger in her heart and a choking sensation in her throat. "One will be sufficient, I dare say; and that is—"

"Yes, and that is!" echoed Blanche, eagerly.

"That"—turning slowly round and confronting her companion—"that I should decline to see him!"

"Oh! really!" opening her orbs in wide-eyed surprise; "I thought from your manner at first that you quite wanted to kiss and be friends! rising and walking over to the glass, and rearranging the front of her fine fringe with little complacent pats of her jewelled fingers.

"Then you thought wrong!" said Helen, ungrammatically, and moving towards the door.

"Now I am sure it is tea time, and I am

dying for a cup of tea. Come downstairs. I have no doubt that Mrs. Towers thinks by this time we must have settled all the affairs of the nation."

They had settled a good deal, had Helen been known.

That evening Miss Despard sent a delicate note on thick, grey paper, and written in a broad, black hand, to Sir Rupert's club.

Looking over his shoulder, we read it, too, and this is what it said,—

"DEAR RUPERT,—

"I had a long talk with Helen to-day, and brought you on the *tapis* in the most diplomatic manner; but all my good offices were of no avail.

"She will never forgive you; and said that were you to call on her at any time, she would decline to see you; so I have spared you the humiliation of the snub direct.

"Come and dine with us to-morrow night, and talk over the whole affair with your affectionate cousin, BLANCHE."

CHAPTER XXX.

It may be inconceivable to some people that any girl could be so treacherous and so crafty as Blanche Despard; but we all know that "the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked;" and Miss Blanche, in addition to a naturally oblique, hard, cruel disposition, had what she considered wrongs of her own to avenge.

She had loved her cousin Rupert as much as it was in her power to care for anyone; and before Helen Brown had come between them he had certainly seemed to derive a certain amount of pleasure from her society.

In her heart of hearts she could not conceal from herself that he cared for her only in a cousinly way, but she had had sanguine hopes of increasing his liking to a warmer and tenderer temperature.

Very delightful were their strolls about the garden, their afternoon rides, their games of tennis.

His notes and letters from abroad were models of their kind—friendly, confidential, amusing, and full of good-humoured sketches of John Bull and Uncle Sam.

Delightful, too, were the little gifts that he never failed to bring home in his hand; and more delightful than all was it to see him return again and again from his wanderings entirely and unmistakably heart-whole.

Some people's pride is easily aroused, and she had succeeded (with the assistance of her warm imagination and untrammelled tongue) beyond her fondest expectations in erecting a barrier between Rupert and Miss Brown that parted them quite as effectually as if the whole world divided them.

Opportunities arose now of meeting each other and neither of them chose to avail themselves of the occasion.

Sir Rupert was invited to the Towers's house by a young guardman of his acquaintance, to whom Mrs. Towers had given *carte blanche* to bring any of his friends.

"I say, Lynn," he exclaimed, accosting him in Piccadilly, "I'm going to a tea-fight this afternoon in rather a jolly house—will you come? Don't say no if you'd like to say yes."

"A tea-fight!" echoed his friend, with raised brows, and an expression on his face that showed unmistakably in what *very* cheap estimation he held the proffered entertainment. "No, thank you, my dear fellow, I never lend myself to that sort of dissipation. I draw the line at tea!"

"But there are other inducements," continued the guardman, persistently. "Not to mention music, fees, and heaps of pretty girls, there is the host's ward, or piece, or whatever she is—a powerful attraction in herself. You have heard of her, of course—the Tasmanian beauty, Miss Brown—eh?"

"Yes, I have heard of her," replied her former lover, in a tone of well-assumed indifference,

rapping his leg with his cane, and avoiding his interlocutor's eyes.

"You ought to know her," proceeded the other, with increased animation. "It is a duty that every eligible, or ineligible, bachelor owes to himself—a presentation to Miss Brown. She really is awfully pretty, no nonsense about it; and there is no doubt whatever about the cash. I'll call for you about five, and you shall see the enchantress for yourself. Who knows but that she might be your fate, eh?" bestowing a playful poke to his friend's ribs: "and I shall have all the credit and the *félicité* of having launched you both into matrimony."

"Many thanks, my dear fellow, for your amiable intentions; but 'tis, unfortunately, quite out of my power to avail myself of your friendly offices. I have an engagement with Brooks. He wants me to look at a couple of cobs he is thinking of buying—and I promised to give my very valuable advice."

"And you would rather go and look at a pair of horses than come and be introduced to the prettiest girl in London!" said the guardsman, in a disgusted tone. "Well, everyone to their taste!—but I can't say much for yours! At any rate, it's not an offer that will go begging—and here comes Maybrick! Ta-ta!"

A few mornings later, Mr. and Mrs. Towers and Helen were seated at the breakfast-table, discussing their engagements for the day—the entertainment of the previous evening—and opening various highly-scented and brilliantly monogrammed notes. Mr. Towers was buried in the morning paper, above the edge of which the top of his shiny bald-head was just visible—though he occasionally appeared from behind it to swallow some coffee, or a mouthful of cold raised pie.

"Does not Sir Rupert Lynn live down near the Despards?" he suddenly asked, lowering his paper, and looking towards Helen.

"Yes!" she answered, with a sudden suffusion of colour. "His place is within two miles!"

"Then you must have known him!" continued Mr. Towers, sharply. "You know him, then—eh?" he reiterated, by no means blind to his young friend's sudden confusion.

"Yes, I knew him—once!" she returned, significantly.

"And you cut him now! Ah—well I suppose he was mixed up in that business—eh?"

A faint assent was his only reply.

"Well, whatever grudge you may have against him, he is certainly a fine fellow. Just listen to this!" clearing his throat, and giving his spectacles an impressive hitch.

"Last night, between twelve and one o'clock, a fire broke out in a house in Albany-street. It appears that it had been smouldering for a considerable time, and that, when the flames burst out, they made such headway that the whole upper part of the house and stairs were in a blaze before the fire-engines could be summoned. Some of the inmates were rescued with the greatest difficulty."

"In one case, a man jumped from the third floor into a sheet spread out to receive him, and informed the crowd that another lodger—a youth—who was confined to his bed with a broken leg, after making frantic endeavours to gain the stairs had, by this time, succumbed to the flames. On hearing this, one of the bystanders dashed into the house, scaled the fiery staircase, and shortly afterwards appeared at the open window with the boy in his arms."

"A roar of many voices greeted his appearance, and the crowd surged to and fro with throbbing excitement, as they beheld the pair above them, standing out distinctly against a ruddy background, and heard the loud crash of the falling staircase."

"It was, indeed, a moment of intense suspense, till the fire-escape reached the third story. Seconds were of priceless moment, for the flames were spreading fast. There was a general gasp of relief as the crowd beheld the adventurous stranger descending the ladder—a very difficult feat—with his helpless prize in his arms."

"They had barely reached *terra firma* when the floor of the room that they had just quitted

fell in with a sound of thunder; and the window, in which they had been standing sixty seconds previously, was simultaneously enveloped in sheets of flame."

"It appears that the fire originated in the upsetting of a kerosene lamp in one of the bed-rooms, and that the conflagration had extended to the very curtains of the bed before its horrified occupant had realized the catastrophe."

"The dense mass of people who were assembled in the street received the lame boy and his deliverer with enthusiasm."

"The former was wholly unscathed; but the gentleman who had risked his life on his behalf had his clothes and his hair scorched, and one of his arms very badly burnt."

"Evidently he is one of those who do good deeds and blush to find them fame, for he declined to give his name or address. And having made over his charge to the care of a relative vanished in the crowd."

"We have since learned that the name of this gallant young gentleman is Sir Rupert Lynn, of Cargow, County Kent, formerly an officer in the Black Hussars."

"Now, that's the sort of thing that stirs up my old blood," said Mr. Towers, laying down the paper. "I should like to know that young man. I think Stanton is a friend of his, and I'll get an introduction through him, and ask him to dinner. Eh! what do you say, Helen, or has he offended past forgiveness?"

"Of course you can ask him, if you please," replied Helen, quietly; "but I think you will find that he will not avail himself of your invitation. He is not more anxious to meet me than I am to meet him."

"It's not a lover's quarrel, is it?" asked Mr. Towers, brusquely.

"My dear Tom! What are you thinking of?" cried his wife, agitated. "These are pretty manners! Don't mind him, Helen, it is no business of his; don't answer any of his questions. It is no affair of his when, how, or where, you quarrelled with this young baronet, who has taken such a hold on his fancy."

"I shall certainly take your advice," said Helen, rising to leave the room, with an ill-assumed air of gaiety. "I cannot possibly make you my father confessor, Mr. Towers—you could hardly expect that!"

When the door had closed, he cleared his throat, rubbed his spectacles, put them slowly on, and looked gradually through them at his wife, said very impressively—

"I'll tell you what it is, Em! She and that young fellow have had some love-passages between them. Believe me, I can see as far into a milestone as most. Her face was the colour of the rising sun the moment his name was mentioned. Shall I ask him to dinner—eh? Help a lame dog over the stile!"

"No, no! on no account! Fancy an old man like you meddling in young people's love affairs! Just leave them to themselves! If they really care for one another, they will make it up; and if not, it is far better to just let them drift quietly apart."

CHAPTER XXXI.

BUT, in spite of Blanche's manoeuvres, in spite of their own disinclination, it was ordered by fate (who often takes these matters in hand) that Sir Rupert and Helen were to meet—to speak to each other.

It came about in this way. Lady Frances De Lacy, who was one of the smartest, gayest, most popular leaders of society, was giving a grand afternoon entertainment to half the *beau monde* in London at her villa on the Thames.

The season was waning; it was now the middle of July, and it was positively the last appearance for this season of many fashionables who were on the eve of taking wing for the country or the Continent, and had just come down to "show themselves" at Lady Frances's fête.

The lawns and slopes were scattered over with a very brilliant, well-dressed crowd. Refreshments were served in the villa, though trays of

tempting ices and strawberries were carried about the lawns by six full-sized footmen with powdered hair.

The Hungarian band was discoursing sweet music, and all was going as merry as a marriage-bell.

Under the shade of a magnificent lime-tree Helen Brown was seated in a low wicker chair, slowly drawing a pattern on the grass with her white lace sunshade, and responding to the soft nothings that a young man who sat slightly behind her was pouring into her ear with a languid—nay, a discouraging indifference.

"The beautiful Miss Brown" was the cynosure of many eyes, and quite one of the sights and one of the things to be seen on that warm, sleepy July afternoon.

She really received every encouragement to rank herself as a professional beauty, but she shrank with dismay from the flattering prospect. No, no; it gave no pleasure to see hundreds of pairs of eyes turned on her with unconcealed curiosity or bold admiration. She did not feel a glow of honest pride when she beheld her last new photo publicly exhibited in a shop window between a popular burlesque actress and Ceta-wayo.

No, no! She despatched Mr. Towers to rescue it in hot haste—but it was gone! The shopman declared it had already been purchased by a tall, dark gentleman, who said that he was sure that there was some mistake in its appearing in such a manner. He had bought all the copies, and, strange to say, had torn them into little pieces, and left them in the shop!

Mr. Towers hastened back to his young ward, and told her this extraordinary tale with much animation. He did not again fail to remark her rising colour and her evident embarrassment.

"It was that fellow Lynn, I suppose," he remarked to his wife, as he stood at the door of his dressing-room, adorning himself for a dinner-party; and she subsequently heard him telling his reflection in the glass, as he angrily struggled with a refractory white tie, "that he could see as far into a milestone as most people."

To return to Helen after this long digression.

Helen, whom we left sitting under the lime-tree, feeling rather bored, and looking supremely indifferent to all her surroundings—who were eating cream ices, flirting, and telling little society anecdotes, good and bad, under the shade of the same wide-spreading tree:

Suddenly she beheld her hostess approaching—a dainty figure, in one of Worth's most novel combinations—and escorted by a gentleman, to whom she was talking volubly. His head was bent attentively towards the little lady by his side; but when, within a few yards of the tree, he raised it, Helen beheld the handsome and familiar features of Sir Rupert Lynn.

Little did Sir Rupert guess at the pitfall that was before him when Lady Frances had smilingly received him; scolded him playfully for being such a late arrival, and then told him that she wished to present him to a particular friend of hers, had to follow her without delay.

"Miss Brown," she said, in her clear, flute-like voice, apparently unobservant of the curiously hard-strained look on her young friend's face, and her rapid fluctuations of colour, "do you know Sir Rupert Lynn? Sir Rupert," smiling at her companion, who looked as if he had been turned into stone, "allow me to present you to Miss Brown!"

Two icy bows were the result of this unexpected introduction.

"Come, Sir Rupert, take Miss Brown to see my plant house; and if you will allow me, my dear"—turning confidentially, to Helen—"I will take your chair. I shall be very glad of a little rest, for I have been standing the last two hours. I am quite done up!"

So Helen was regularly turned out; and she and her former lover were obliged to make the best of the matter, and to accept the embarrassing situation thus thrust on them with as good a grace as they could muster. Indeed, Helen made a noble struggle for self-command, as she slowly rose, opened her parasol, and looked towards Sir Rupert with a cool little nod, as much as to say, "I am ready." The eyes of so many

people were on her. People who seemed to know in some subtle, curious way that underneath this outward calmness, this studied composure, there lay some hidden romance—nay, perhaps some tragedy that was concealed from their curious eyes!

"Yes; there was something unnatural in the way that those two looked at each other," more than one clever penetrating lady spectator had declared to herself.

Soon they were slowly pacing the velvety lawn—Helen trailing her magnificent white gown behind her, and carrying her head unusually high.

Sir Rupert was very pale. He tightened his lips under his moustache with an air of fierce resolve, and at last he spoke,—

"Do we meet as strangers, Miss Brown? or may I presume that we have known each other before?"

"As strangers—thank you, Sir Rupert. It will be as well to forget our last encounter, when you were good enough to offer me your charity," replied his companion, in a chilly tone.

"Yes, I suppose I have sinned past forgiveness. I know that I have no right to your leniency," he returned, in a low voice. "But even to meet again as strangers is better than nothing, if you will give me another chance—a fresh start, and let me make amends for the past in some way!"

"Past!" echoed Helen; "we have no past. I thought we had agreed to bury it out of sight! Pray, do not forget that I am a stranger, whom you have never heard of, nor met until to-day. How could we possibly have a past in common?" raising her pretty brows with a smile of interrogation.

Her companion was prevented from making any immediate answer; for at this instant he was accosted by a sprightly lady in a costume of the latest and most æsthetic shade of green, who, approaching him with outstretched hands, exclaimed in a high, shrill voice,—

"Is this true what I have just heard?"

"I cannot tell you, until you are more explicit," he returned, with a laugh.

"Mr. Barry has just told me that you are off to Rio Janeiro with Captain Torrens to-morrow. I declare I can compare you to nothing but the Wandering Jew! Is it true?"

"Yes; perfectly true. My passage is taken—my clothes are packed; for once you have been correctly informed."

"And why are you going?" proceeded his questioner, in a key of remonstrance. "Surely you must have seen everything by this time, and have arrived at the conclusion that there's no place like home. He must have an uneasy conscience—must he not, Miss Brown?" to Helen, with whom she had a slight acquaintance. "What do you say?"

"Torrens is going out about some silver mines, and I am specially bound to see the Andes—the Amazon—the old half-buried cities of the Incas of Peru," interrupted Sir Rupert.

"I would have thought that the grouse-shooting next month would have appealed to you more; but I really begin to believe what I have more than once heard hinted," dropping her voice, and looking at Sir Rupert with a smile of mischievous significance.

"And what may that have been?" he asked, with a smile of interrogation.

"That you were the prey of unrequited love—that you have some hard-hearted fair lady in the background who will not listen to your suit, and your mind knows no peace!"

"What utter nonsense!" exclaimed Sir Rupert, impatiently. "Do you mean to say that a fellow cannot take a trip abroad without all the old gossip setting their heads together and inventing some mysterious reason like—er—money or madness?"

"But you are *always* going abroad. You are a confirmed rambler!" persisted the lady. "I really think that it is quite time for you to settle down and marry, and become a quiet, home-keeping member of society. Don't you agree with me, Miss Brown? Don't you think that it is quite time for him to be looking about him for a wife?" appealing suddenly to her companion.

Before Helen could frame a reply Sir Rupert retorted,—

"It is awfully good of you to take such a kind interest in me, Lady Ann; but I'm o'er young to marry yet, am I not? And as far as I can see, I shall never be a Benadict," and muttering some excuse about Miss Brown and the plant house he took off his hat and made a dignified retreat.

"What a vulgar, little busybody Lady Ann is! One would believe that she was the daughter of a hundred earls to listen to her gossip," said Sir Rupert, angrily.

"And are you really going abroad again so soon?" said Helen, with assumed indifference, and in a cool matter-of-fact voice.

"Yes; I have nothing much to keep me at home now," he replied, with a significant inflexion on the last word. "And I suppose by the time I return I shall find you married!"

"I! I see no immediate prospect of the event," said Helen, looking straight before her.

"But it is on the cards, is it not? I saw a paragraph about you in one of the society papers not very long ago."

"If you had looked into the same journal the following week you would have seen that ridiculous report flatly contradicted," said Helen, with some asperity.

"Then you are not engaged to Lord Tavy Leeborough?" asked her companion, eagerly.

"No, I am not; but I really think, Sir Rupert, that for a stranger you ask singularly odd questions!"

"I beg your pardon," he replied, humbly, and for some moments they paced the lawn in silence.

They seemed entirely to have forgotten the plant house—seemed oblivious of their surroundings, and indifferent as to where their steps tended.

They were naturally surprised when they found themselves alone in a lovely, deliciously cool, shady walk, where the branching trees overhead stretched out their grim garments and kept out the sun. The band and the buzz of hundreds of tongues sounded quite afar off as they strolled along, side by side, in this sequestered spot.

(To be continued.)

QUITS.

—305—

FRED HARCOURT and Belle Montrose were engaged to be married. Fortune smiled upon their prospective union; their parents had given a delighted and cordial consent, for they were close friends, the fathers having been college chums, while the mothers were cousins.

So, as there really was no drawback connected with the course of their love, Belle proceeded to manufacture one.

It was altogether too smooth.

She was a constant attendant at the theatre whenever a love drama held the stage, and she compared, much to his disadvantage, her gentle and serene lover with the fiery heroes she there encountered.

It was not worth while being engaged, she declared, pettishly, to herself, if the path to the altar was to be thus tame and uninteresting.

She looked around for a grievance, and soon became convinced that the betrothal was not of her seeking, but forced upon her by her parents.

She was bent upon becoming a martyr, and even assured herself that Fred did not love her at all, but was coldly and indifferently carrying out his parent's wishes.

Now this was a great injustice to the young fellow, whose affection for her was both deep and tender, although he had never been called upon to manifest it after the passionate and thrilling fashion of her beloved stage heroes.

A handsome French tenor, of the magnificent muscular kind, had joined their church choir, and his fine black eyes were in the habit of expressing the most undisguised admiration for the leading soprano, Miss Belle Montrose, who did not seem at all displeased thereby, but rather to answer with corresponding glances from hers

of deepest blue, and that especially when her *fiancé* was present.

One Saturday evening, when the choir practice was over rather earlier than usual, Belle found that Fred had not arrived to take her home, and gave Victor Dufresne permission to do so, which fact Fred presently discovered, much to his chagrin.

He followed and overtook them just as she bade the Frenchman "Good-night" with her hand in his.

"Belle," said Fred, with unwhetted sharpness, as he followed her into the house. "I do not wish you to accept Mr. Dufresne's escort again! You know I'm always on hand to accompany you."

"Indeed, sir! Then pray where were you to-night?"

"I was there at the usual time. You were out earlier than other nights."

"Later, on the contrary," she contradicted.

"Excuse me, it was quite fifteen minutes before your regular hour of dismissal when I arrived, and you were gone."

"Thank you, Mr. Harcourt! You might as well say at once that I am not telling the truth."

"No, dear; but your insisting on it does not make it a fact. I have proof that you are mistaken."

"I say I am not mistaken!" she exclaimed, in temper. "I was both tired and mortified waiting, and was grateful when Victor Dufresne said he was coming my way and offered to walk with me."

"I am very sorry, dear, that I missed you, and will not let it happen again. But Dufresne's way home is in an opposite direction."

"He wasn't going home. He was going to skate across the bay, and has taken a wager to reach a certain point in a given time."

"He must be mad! Why, after these two days of thaw, the ice is like a sponge! I wouldn't venture to do it for anything."

"Oh, every man is not so cautious—as you!"

"Why, my dear, there's no bravery in doing a perilous thing except when necessity demands it. Then, of course, hesitation is cowardice."

"Oh, I hate effeminate men," said Belle, with the usual lack of reason she was pleased to display during these sparring matches.

Fred frowned, but did not reply.

Presently he came over to where she sat swinging her hat over the end of the sofa, and said,—

"Promise me, Belle, dear, that you will not let Dufresne come home with you again. Indeed I must forbid it."

"Must you, indeed! Well, then, I'll come home alone. I can certainly dispense with your tardy attendance without much loss."

"I have already apologized. Won't you forgive me?"

"I am old enough to take care of myself, and quite capable of doing so, and in future I prefer to return alone."

And she raised her pretty head, with its braids of chestnut hair, in quite a tragedy-quien style, until it was even higher than Fred's.

"Oh, no, Belle, you must not do that," he said.

"Why not, pray?"

"Because—well, I don't like masculine women."

And he took his hat and escaped before she had time to retort.

All the following week, Belle refused to see Fred.

If he called during the day she was out; if in the evening, she was engaged, or she felt too tired to come downstairs, or she had a headache.

He waited in some trepidation for Saturday night to come, for the choir would practise, and he knew she would not fail to be there, unless detained by something really serious.

Fully half-an-hour before the required time, therefore, he was at his post.

The last strains of the organ had hardly died away when Belle came tripping down the steps, the first to leave the building.

Fred came forward, lifting his hat with formal politeness, and offered his arm.

"Good-evening, Belle! I'm glad to see you at last. Is your headache quite gone?"

"I am very well, thank you," she answered, coldly, ignoring his proffered arm and thrusting both hands into the depths of her muff. "Will you allow me to say good-night? I am in some haste."

"Don't be silly, Belle," he cried, losing patience, although half-laughing. "Surely I can walk as fast as you can!"

"Mr. Harcourt, I do not wish for your society," she said, with great haughtiness.

"Miss Montrose, I am sorry to seem intrusive," he replied, with equal haughtiness, "but as it is absolutely impossible for you to traverse this part of the city unattended, especially on a Saturday night, I have the right to insist upon your accepting my escort—at least while the existing state of affairs continues."

What foolish and angry speech might have been called forth by this masterful declaration can only be surmised, for at that moment Victor Dufresne came striding along, rattling his skates over his shoulder, and humming an opera bouffe air, more congenial to his ear than the melodies lately practised.

The previous Sunday had found the handsome tenor in his accustomed place at the morning service, so it may be taken for granted that he had thought better of his foolhardy intention of trying the ice. He was, indeed, the last person in the world to run the risk of a watery grave.

"Ah, good-evening, monsieur," he said, gaily. "A heavenly night, is it not? And once more I have the felicity to walk the same way with *ma'mselle*."

Belle greeted him cordially, and made room for him by her side. And so it happened that she had two protectors upon the very evening she had determined to have none.

She replied pleasantly to Victor's remarks, conversing exclusively with him, but in no marked manner, for she sometimes remembered her dignity, and was at heart too much of a lady to offer any affront to her *fiancé* in the presence of a third person.

All the same, she was furiously angry with Fred for not allowing her to have her own way, although she certainly would have been much more angry if he had done so and had let her go home alone.

Their walk led them to a hill, over which they must go, or else take a much longer road. Its sides were slippery to glassiness, and the young men simultaneously offered a hand to Belle.

She laughed merrily, darted forward, and choosing a part where the icy snow was more lumpy, skimmed it like a bird before her companions realised what she meant to do.

"I knew I could do it better than either of you!" she cried, when, after many slips and backward steps, they at length stood beside her at the top.

Then she tossed her head and cast a scornful glance at Fred, remembering a certain saucy speech of his.

And of what was he thinking as he gazed on her bright and laughing face?

He was saying, mentally,—

"Belle is certainly growing prettier every day. I never saw a more lovely girl!"

And then it began gradually to dawn upon his mind that he was, after all, a rather cool sort of lover.

But Belle was not a thought-reader, so she turned to talk to Victor Dufresne.

"*Ma'mselle* is divine. Did not an angel's wings assist *ma'mselle*?"

"You may think so if you choose, monsieur!" laughed Belle. "I certainly feel that I have reached a celestial region when I look down upon that lovely scene. Is it not beautiful?"

And with a comprehensive wave of her arm she indicated the snow-clad hills and frosted trees, glittering in the moonlight like myriads of diamonds, and the happy, joyous skaters on the frozen bay giving life and interest to the whole.

"A train will pass below soon; I hear a distant whistle," said Belle, presently. "Let us wait here until it has gone by."

Just then Fred gave a startled cry, and bent forward.

"Monsieur——"
"What is it?" exclaimed his two companions in a breath.

"Look! Do you not see a figure, small, like a child's, lying there?"

"Oh, yes. Lying across the track. Ah, *mon Dieu*, he will be killed."

And Victor Dufresne covered his eyes with his hands as the great snorting locomotive, with its fiery eyes, flashed round a corner.

Belle fell on her knees in the cold snow with her clasped hands raised to the starry heavens above; but Fred was already at the foot of the hill, speeding like the wind toward his fellow-creature in dreary peril.

The hot breath of the merciless monster half-choked him as he dragged the unconscious boy almost from under it; but they were both safe, and, save for a gash on Fred's cheek, uninjured.

He lifted in his arms and carried the boy to where Dufresne and Belle hurried to meet him.

Belle took the little fellow in her strong young arms.

"Is he hurt?" she gasped, for she was quivering, but held her burden with nervous force.

"I do not think so—at least not by the train," said Fred. "This wound on his temple is the cause of his unconsciousness. See!" holding up a pair of skates, "he is some little chap who was going to the bay, and racing down the hill and across the track, tripped, likely, striking his head upon the rail. He is only stunned; but if Mr. Dufresne will carry him to your home, Belle, I will hasten for Dr. Clark."

"Pardon, monsieur, but permit me to reverse the duties. Monsieur will bear the boy whom his presence of mind has saved from a death so terrible; and I will do myself the honour to call on the doctor."

And Victor Dufresne, who began to be apprehensive for his evening's sport, bowed low and left them.

Fred turned to relieve the girl, and as he bent to take the boy, a drop of blood from his cheek fell upon the back of her gloveless hand.

She became deathly white, and tottered as if about to fall, but rallying again, walked quietly by his side, without uttering a word.

The little fellow, who already showed signs of returning animation, was put to bed; and the physician coming in almost immediately, he was soon sufficiently restored to give an account of himself.

The accident had occurred just as Fred had conjectured, and on learning the lad's address, Mrs. Montrose at once despatched a servant for his parents.

Belle remained upstairs while Doctor Clark attended to Fred's hurt.

When the doctor had gone, leaving Fred's cheek cross-barred, like an apple-tart, he said, Belle came down to him.

She was pale, red-eyed, and trembling, so that her quivering lips refused to speak, and she was forced to resort to a more eloquent mode of expression.

She threw her arms around his neck and burst into a passion of tears upon his shoulders.

"Dearest, what is it?" he said, anxiously.

"Why are you crying, love?"

"Oh, my best beloved—my dear, brave Fred—how can you speak to me, or touch me? Why don't you despise such a silly, stupid, miserable goose of a girl?"

"But why, my darling! What have you done?" not thinking just then of past offences.

"What have I done? Why, I called you an ef-f-feminine man—*you*."

Fred gave a ringing laugh.

"Oh, my dear girl, but we are quits, for did not I call you a masculine woman?—*you*, who are now threatening to drown yourself in a deluge of the most feminine tears, which I must straightway proceed to kiss away."

Whereupon Fred became a very Romeo in his tender demonstrations, and Belle was happier than ever before in her life, and forgot from that moment all about her yearnings for a romantic sorrow.

THE SEARCH FOR ALICE DESPARD.

—201—

(Continued from page 513.)

"But why would you never agree to see me?" demanded Lady Pelham.

"Because I guessed when you saw me you'd recognize me, my lady."

"But you must know I could have only gratitude for anyone who had been so faithful to my poor Lucy. Caroline, what became of the baby? Don't you know if she is alive Alice Despard is my heiress?"

"I've heard so, my lady."

"And where is she? Can you give me any clue to help me to find her?"

Mrs. Lovemore smiled.

"I rather fancy my lady you'll find Miss Elsie at Pelham House when you return, but no doubt you know better than I do."

"Elsie—Elsie Desborough?"

"Her father had made the name of Despard too notorious to dare to bear it before she was five years old, my lady. As to 'Elsie,' in many Scotch families it's the pet name for Alice, as anyone'll tell you; Elsie Desborough is your own niece, my lady, and after you the heiress of the Underwoods, and I can give you letters and papers which will prove all I say."

"But why did you keep silent all these years?"

"Because I'd lost sight of Miss Elsie myself till last December, and then, well, my lady, I've got eyes in my head though I am an old woman, and I didn't want to spoil my darling's chance of getting a husband who sought her for herself."

"You mean Dr. Glynn?"

"Just that, my lady. Bless you I saw how it was to be from the first, and I knew if once he thought she was your heiress he'd never tell her he wanted her for his wife. He may want to jilt her now, he's that proud; but I reckon he's too much in love for that."

After all Howard Glynn could not be married in June. A great heiress cannot be married out of hand like a penniless little girl. The lawyers took up the matter, and were extremely busy in proving Howard's *fiancée* was not Elsie Desborough at all but a much more important person—to wit, Alice Despard.

Of course the Underwoods, father and son, were furious, and Hilda sent her half-sister a very indignant letter, accusing her of treachery and fraud; but in the end the Hon. Edgar and his wife fared far better than they deserved, for Lady Pelham (who had saved a large fortune, apart from the revenues of Castle Underwood) agreed to settle ten thousand pounds on her cousin in such a way that he would receive the interest for his life, but be powerless to touch the principal, which must descend to his eldest child.

Howard Glynn—at the earnest desire of the Pelhams—took the name of Underwood on his marriage, and Dr. and Mrs. Underwood are one of the happiest couples in London. Claude Despard, *alias* Desborough, never returned to prey upon them. He started some new speculation at the Antipodes which thrived wonderfully, and when, some five years later, his favourite daughter was left a widow, she and her only child, a dark-eyed girl, went out to live with him.

Edgar Underwood's death almost reconciled his father to the loss of Castle Underwood. The old man reformed in his last years, and became quite a pleasant relation to the Pelhams and Glynn-Underwoods. He loved Elsie far better than he had ever been able to love Hilda, and her boys have been taught to call him grand-father.

Mrs. Carlyle still feels aggrieved that the man she jilted in his poverty did not come back to her in his prosperity; but in the course of years a well-to-do farmer who lived near aunt Deb, offered himself and his property to Meta and was promptly accepted, so that Howard is no longer troubled by begging letters from his cousin.

No one ever called Howard Glynn-Underwood

a fortune-hunter, because all the world could see that his whole heart was wrapped up in his wife, the brown-eyed girl he had learned to love before he had even heard of THE SEARCH FOR ALICE DESPARD.

[THE END.]

FACETIE.

THINKS is a lesson to be learned from the pin. It is given a head that it may not go too far.

A silver lining in your pockets is more encouraging than one in the clouds.

HE: "I may be poor, but there was a time in my life when I rode in my carriage." She: "Yes, and your mother pushed it, too."

ETHEL: "I can't marry you, but I will be a sister to you." Harry: "Who asked you to be a sister to me?" Ethel: "Your brother."

"Yes," said Mrs. Shepper, "I bought this dress at a bargain counter, but I'm not sure that it was not the shopkeeper who made the bargain."

"You never accept any of my jokes, now, about lady shoppers who never buy," said Snickers to the editor. "No, I'm married now," was the satisfactory response.

THE JUDGE: "I hope I shall not see you here again." Prisoner (who is arrested weekly): "Not see me? Why, yer ain't goin' to resign yer post, are yer?"

"ARE any of the colours discernible to the touch?" asked the school-teacher. "I have often felt blue," replied the boy at the head of the class.

TURNS: "Smith is looking very low-spirited. Has there been any trouble in the family?" DUBBS: "Yes; a rich uncle has just recovered from a serious illness."

MISS SNAPPEY: "I wonder why Maud gave her age as twenty-five when she married old Moneybags?" Miss GAPPY: "Oh, I suppose she made a discount for cash."

MISS UNDERHILL: "I have been told that you are poor. I think we had better break our relations." Stewart: "I have broken all mine already."

"YES," said the old man, "I have always found it best to pay cash. I have paid cash for everything I've got but my wife. I got her for nothing, and she's the dearest thing I ever got."

AN Irish lawyer, going to dinner, left his direction in the keyhole. "Gone to Bliss's luncheon; and if you can't read this take it to any lawyer on this floor, and he will read it for you."

"MR. son," said the economical father, "those cigars are better than I smoked at your age."

"Father," replied the youth, "it pains me to do it, but I am compelled to state that they are better than the cigars you smoke now."

TOMIX: "My friend Soarer's business frequently puts his life in danger, but I've never yet known him to desert his post." Toddies: "What's his business?" Tomix: "He's an aeronaut."

HICKS: "It pays in some ways to have rich neighbours." Dix: "How so?" Hicks: "I can't afford to buy my wife a better sashkin than Mrs. Neighbour wears, and so she won't have any."

"WHY in the world don't you grease that lawn-mower of yours?" asked a lady of her next-door neighbour's gardener. "Missus told me not to till you had your pianer tuned," answered the man.

JACKSON: "Well, what did your wife give you for Christmas?" Johnson: "Why, it was a— or—let me see, a very fine—ah—dear me! I can't remember just what it is, but I know it is very becoming to her."

LITTLE GIRL (pleadingly): "I wish you would save that doll in the window for me until mamma can come and see it." Toy-dealer (genially): "We have hundreds just like it." Little Girl (in disgust): "Then I don't want it."

"Now, you will have to ask papa for his consent," said Miss Willing to her accepted suitor. "Oh, yes! Certainly!" replied Jack Coy. "Of course! Er—has he a telephone at his office?"

"Miss Flor claims to have made a thousand refusals of offers of marriage." "That's easily explained. When young Callow asked her to marry him, she replied: 'No, a thousand times, no!'"

"Mr. brougham is at the door, Captain," said Lady Gushington. "Can I drive you anywhere?" "Oh, no, no, thank you immensely!" replied the Captain. "Truth is, I'm going the other way."

TEACHER: "I find only one mistake in your exercise. You have passed phonograph as a noun of feminine gender. Why did you do that?" "Cause I thought it was one of the machines that repeats everything you say."

IN putting the "question of questions," a Scotchman took his funamorate to his family burial-ground, and said, "Would ye like to lie there, Jeanie, by-and-by?" She said she would, and thus the thing was settled.

"We are going to have Mabel very well educated," said a clever young matron recently. "I don't want to be well educated," came in the unexpected voice of Mabel, a little tot of five, from another room. "I want to be just like you."

MRS. MINKS: "Have you filled the parlour lamp?" Domestic: "I guess it don't need fillin', ma'am." "The parlour was in use last evening until nearly midnight." "Yes, ma'am, but your daughter's young man was the only caller."

"DON'T you think, my dear fellow," remarked one of the family to the visitor who had outstayed his welcome, "that your wife and children must miss you very much?" "No doubt. Thanks for the suggestion—I'll send for them," he replied.

WIFE: "Cousin Clara needs a new penknife and I would like to give her one of mine; but people say that a gift of a knife will cut friendship." Husband: "Have no fear; no knife that one woman gives another will cut anything."

FIRST NIGHTER: "The man who writes the dramatic criticisms for your paper does not know a good play from a bad one." Editor: "I know it, but what can we do? He is the only man on the staff who is tall enough to see over the bonnets."

"WILDERBOER is a true friend," said Jones, gratefully; "there are few like him." "What has he done?" asked Gilderaleve. "I told him I had an awful cold, and he sympathised with me, but he didn't suggest a single remedy. That's the sort of friend to have."

HUSBAND (drawing out his purse reluctantly): "Well, my dear, how much is it to-day, any way?" "W—oh," said the wife, "I was going shopping." "Oh, that's all you were going to tell me, is it?" returning the purse to his pocket unopened.

"HEARTY," she said, thoughtfully. "What is it?" responded the worried business man, somewhat shortly. "I wish you could rearrange your business a little bit." "How?" "So as to be a bear on the Stock Exchange instead of at home."

SONNY: "Oh papa, who is that ragged man?" Papa: "That, my son, is the great composer of grand operas." And who is that fine-looking gentleman with good clothes? "That's the man who wrote the latest popular song. Never pay the money that you owe."

A YOUNG widow put up a costly monument to her late husband, and inscribed upon it: "My grief is so great that I cannot bear it." A year or so later, however, she married again, and, feeling a little awkwardness about the inscription, she solved the difficulty by adding one word to it—"alone."

LITTLE JOHNNY: "What does 'sustaining' mean, pa?" Pa: "To sustain is to help." Little Johnny: "But the paper says the man sustained an accident. Isn't an accident something you can't help?" Pa: "I think I hear your mother calling you, Johnny. Run along; I'm very busy now."

WHEN Sidney Smith was rector of a parish in Yorkshire, he found his weary discussing the propriety of paving the approach to the church with wooden blocks. Having decided to undertake it, the question arose as to how. "Gentlemen," said the witty rector, "I think if you will all put your heads together, as the saying is, the thing can be easily accomplished."

"OUR hero sat in the corner of the railway compartment devouring his newspapers," read Miss Myrtle Dolan from the latest acquisition to her paper-covered library. "He was devouring what?" asked her father, with sudden interest. "His newspaper, the book says," replied Myrtle. "Oh, yes! I thought 'twor a mon you were readin' about, an' now he turns out to be a goat."

THE following passage of arms was recently overheard between a coachman and a beggar outside the Four Courts, Dublin. As the beggar was whining for alms at the carriage-door the coachman turned round and called out sharply to him: "Come, tay man, take your rage out of this." The beggar, with a withering glance at the coachman's livery, retorted: "Me rage! They're my own, my man, my own! Dy'e twig!—which is more than yer can say of yourn!"

A TYNSIDE pitman's wife, not being satisfied with her son's progress at school, called upon the village schoolmaster to know the reason why her Geordie did not get on with his learnin' like other folk's lads. "Hey, Mistress Dawson, why your lad has not the capacity to learn, I am sorry to say." "Capacity, mister? capacity, indeed! Why hout, mon, Geordie shall have a capacity, even if it costs me half-a-crown; the very next time I go to Newcastle."

THE two ladies had not met for some time, and they were vitally interested in each other's welfare. "I hope your health is better than when I saw you last," said the first. "No, I grow worse every day," responded her friend, despondently. "Too bad, too bad! What seems to be the matter?" "No one knows; and the doctors say that they cannot tell till after the post-mortem." "Why, how awful! You poor, dear thing! In your weak state you can never live through that."

IT was at a railway refreshment room. The passenger was hungry and in a hurry. "Please pass me them pertaters, mister," he said, addressing an elegant gentleman who sat near him. The latter slowly focused his gold eyeglasses on the speaker. "Did you think I was one of the waiters?" he asked, idly. The others held their knives and forks in mid-air, expecting to see the man shrivel up; but no such phenomenon took place. He turned and beckoned to the nearest waiter. "George, come here, please." "What is it, sir?" asked George. "I want to apologise to you—that is all. You see I mistook this party here for you, but I hope you won't be much offended at it. Now pass me them pertaters, and we'll go on with the meal."

A VERY pompous army surgeon was sent to a recruiting depot in England to examine a number of lads who had taken the Queen's shilling. The abrupt, overbearing manner of the doctor so frightened one nervous recruit that he was unable to answer the first question as to his name and place of birth. "Why don't you answer?" roared the doctor. "What's your name, I say!" Still the panic-stricken lad only stared at the questioner. "Why, I believe the fellow is stone deaf!" exclaimed the doctor, and, taking out his watch, he held it to the left ear of the recruit, saying, "Can you hear that ticking?" The youth shook his head. The watch was applied to the other ear with the same effect, and then the doctor began to shower his indignation on the head of the future soldier. "What do you mean by enlisting when you're stone deaf! Why, you can't even hear the ticking of a watch when it is held within an inch of your ear!" Then the worm turned. "Yah! yah! She no goin'!" roared the badgered boy. When the doctor held the watch to his own ear and found that it had indeed stopped, his feelings were too powerful to be expressed.

SOCIETY.

THE Prince of Wales will spend a few days in Paris, at the Hotel Bristol, on his way home from the Riviera.

THE Dowager Duchess of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha will be a great deal with the Queen during Her Majesty's stay at Clonix, and will probably pay a visit to England in the course of this year.

THE Duke of York has adopted the German fashion of wearing a wedding-ring on the third finger of the left hand. The custom will probably now become fashionable among English husbands; and it is regarded by some as another mark of recognition by society of the equality of the sexes.

THERE is grave doubt if the Russian Emperor and Empress can visit England this year, as it is against the etiquette of the Russian Court for his Majesty to leave during the year of mourning for the late Emperor. It is possible, however, that some special reason for their coming may outweigh this point of etiquette. The Queen and the Prince and Princess of Wales are very anxious that the young Emperor and Empress should come, and it is certain that if they do they will have a most cordial reception.

THE Princesses Victoria and Maud are both expert skaters, and the Duke of York, too, is fairly proficient on the ice. All three of them enter *con amore* into the exercise which at one time was one of their mother's favourite outdoor pursuits. Previous to her marriage the Duchess of York used to be seen a great deal on the ice at Richmond, but she is not such an intense lover of outdoor life as her Royal sisters-in-law, who never seem to weary of walking, driving, or skating, when there is an opportunity for the latter.

WHEN the Stud House, Hampton Court, reverted to the Queen, on the death of Sir George Maude, it was granted by Her Majesty to Princess Frederica of Hanover, who has now decided that it is too large a place for her, and that it will suit her better to retain her apartments in Hampton-Court Palace, which, however, she has not inhabited since the summer of 1891. The Stud House is about to be thoroughly repaired by the Office of Works, and the interior will be redecorated. The Queen has not yet given away the residence, but it will probably be offered either to the Duke of York or to Princess Louise. If none of the Royal Family care to live there the Queen will probably offer the place either to Lord Breadalbane or Lord Carrington.

It is said that the Kaiser does not admire the newest mode in ball dresses, the sleeves of which leave the top of the arm free, and break out into exaggerated puffs at the elbow. His Majesty, it seems, has noticed such sleeves at Court festivities, and has not admired them, and his opinion will be shared by many that they cut the figure in half and destroy the beauty of outline in general effect. It is therefore probable that the less novel, but perhaps, strictly speaking, more becoming large sleeve, with the fulness commencing from the shoulder, will for the future alone be seen in Berlin, the latter style having received his Imperial Majesty's personal approval.

WITH the exception of his father-in-law, the King of Denmark, and the Emperor of Austria, the Prince of Wales is now the most experienced Royal personage in Europe. All the rest are his juniors, now that the French Bourbons have gone; his is the most illustrious dynasty of Europe, with its background of Tudors, Plantagenets, and Saxon Kings. The Hohenzollerns are but a mushroom dynasty compared thereto; the House of Savoy was but the other day a family of mous-troopers and condottieri; the Romanoffs are hardly four generations emerged from barbarism; three generations back the Serbian dynasty was swine-herding; four generations take the Kings of Sweden to their peasant ancestry at Pau, in the Pyrenees; while even the House of Hapsburg is not so ancient as that of Britain's future King.

STATISTICS.

THE Mint can turn out 170,000 coins of any denomination a day.

LONDON's population increases at the rate of 105,000 a year.

SOME of the largest ocean steamers can be converted into armed cruisers in 30 hours.

IN the new issue of the "London Directory" no less than nine pages are devoted to recording the names and the titles of the Smiths.

IN London alone there are upwards of 170 pianoforte factories, while over 1,300 shops are devoted to the supplying of musical goods of all sorts.

GEMS.

SILENCE is often the wisest antidote to unprofitable or dangerous contention.

IT is the little things that make up life, and the little mistakes have as much effect as the little good deeds. There is no thought or act but has its effect for good or ill.

EVERYTHING good in the world needs emphasis, and certainly such love and enthusiasm for the good and the true as exist within us need all the nourishment they can obtain from free expression and continual sympathy.

IF we work upon marble, it will perish; if we work upon brass, time will efface it; if we rear temples, they will crumble to dust; but if we work upon immortal minds, if we imbue them with principles, with the just fear of God and love of our fellow-men, we engrave on those tablets something which will brighten through all eternity.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CRULLERS.—One cup of sugar, one tablespoonful of butter, two eggs, one cup of rich sweet milk three cups of flour mixed with two teaspoonfuls of baking powder, and one teaspoonful of salt. Cut in desired shapes and fry in very hot lard.

EGGS AND CHEESE.—Two eggs, two ounces of cheese, half ounce butter, pepper and salt; grate the cheese and put it in a small saucepan with the butter and salt and pepper to taste; break the eggs into the pan, stir over the fire till it begins to thicken, then stir off the fire a little till it is a little thick; have neat pieces of toast and pile the mixture on them, and serve hot.

FISH PUDDING.—Six potatoes, one pound cod, one hard egg, one raw egg, one teaspoonful salt, quarter teaspoonful pepper; boil and mash the potatoes, boil the fish, take off skin and bone and break it into flakes; put all in a basin add the hard egg chopped, the raw egg beaten, the seasoning; mix all with a fork; put in pie dish, smooth and score the top, and bake about half an hour.

LEMON WAFFLES.—One cup of butter, two of sugar, five of flour, half a cup of milk, three eggs, one-half a nutmeg grated, teaspoonful of soda, essence of lemon. Roll the dough thin, lift from the board, lay the dough in the sugar; roll again very thin, cut in rounds, and lift with a broad knife, turning them over on the pan so that the sugared side may be uppermost.

MEAT PIE.—Pound and half steak and mutton kidneys, one tablespoonful flour, one teaspoonful salt, a little pepper; cut the meat in thin slices, and dip the pieces in the seasoning and flour mixed; slice the kidney thinly, and do the same to it; put all very loosely in a small pie dish; fill it up with water. Paste—half pound flour, three ounces butter, half teaspoonful baking powder; chop butter among flour, mix to a stiff paste with water; roll out in a long piece, fold in three, turn and roll again; do this once more. This time a little larger than pie dish, cover neatly, brush with beaten egg, and bake.

MISCELLANEOUS.

WALKING and running are the sports which entail the most severe training on devotees.

THE silks from which British flags are made are all woven in Switzerland.

DANISH lighthouses are supplied with oil to pump on the waves during a storm.

IN the flocks on the Norway coast the clearness of the water is wonderful. Objects the size of half-a-crown may be seen at a depth of 140 or 180 feet.

THE offensive weapon of the ostrich is its leg. It can kick as hard as a mule, and it is a remarkable fact that its kick is forward, never backward.

SWALLOWS fly low before rain because the insects they pursue have then come nearer to the ground in order to escape the moisture of the upper air.

THE best burglar-proof safes are made of alternate layers of hard and soft metal, which are welded together. This combination will not yield to either drill or sledge-hammer.

THE first square books are said to have been made by order of King Attalus, of Pergamos, who directed this plan to be followed for the greater convenience of readers.

THE reading of romances is forbidden by the Koran; hence popular tales are never put in writing among Mohammedans, but are passed from one story-teller to another.

IN their native haunts tigers are divided into three classes: the game-killer, the cattle-lifter, and the man-eater. The latter is almost always an aged beast, whose teeth and claws are no longer serviceable.

CAMELS are now in general use in some parts of Australia. Within twenty-five years a race has been produced larger in frame, sounder in wind and limb, and able to carry more weight than the Asiatic camels originally imported.

"TORPEDO SOUSONS," a new form of torpedo net-cutter, have proved successful in recent tests. They are fixed to the head of the torpedo, and fall apart in striking the net, cutting it so as to let the torpedo pass through and strike the ship.

SIBERIAN women are raised as abject slaves, untidy in dress, and are bought with money or cattle. The most capricious whim of her husband is law to the Siberian woman, and should he desire a divorce he has only to tear the cap from her head.

THE enormous size and massive structure of native houses is among the recent surprising discoveries of explorers among the villages inhabited by numerous warlike tribes—scattered along the streams of New Guinea. Houses 300 to 400 feet long and 100 feet high, among the largest in the world, are reported to be not uncommon.

IRON, through its use for electrical purposes, seems to have developed a new quality, magnetic fatigue. In tests made of transformers lately in London to ascertain the open circuit loss, it has been found that the loss increased steadily for the first two hundred days until it reached a fairly constant value of forty per cent. more than at starting.

THE uses to which paper is put are constantly increasing. Cornices, panels and friezes, medals, boats, carpets, mattresses, and even coffins and telegraph poles, are among the articles now manufactured out of paper, and inventors, it is said, are hoping to find a preparation of compressed paper that will serve as a coating for the armour of war vessels, and not only protect it from corrosion, but even add to its power of resistance.

AMONG the improvements lately introduced into great iron works are electric cranes. These structures are made with heavy iron poles in trestlework fashion and support tramways, upon which these immense cranes travel. For carrying the heavy products of the mills this form of transportation has points of advantage over all others. The lines from the various mills lead to a general storage point, and make shipping much more convenient and expeditious.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

R. E.—It is not necessary.

HENRI.—We have no information available.

KATHLEEN.—Get some dentifrice from a chemist.

MARTIN.—No doubt the Bank of England has a list.

OLD READER.—Of some surgical instrument maker.

INQUIRER.—A patent has been taken out, we believe.

GRITA.—Cannot be done: discoloration affects the valve.

HARDWICK.—You must apply to the Secretary for War for an answer.

G. D.—Plans could only be obtained from the inventor.

ROLAND.—The subject is one that you would require to read up.

DEWEY.—The former is the easiest to manage for a beginner or amateur.

CHURCH.—Seventeen feet is the average height of a full-grown giraffe.

IN DISTRESS.—Your best course would be to consult the clergyman of your parish.

R. A. B.—English postage stamps are gummed with a starch-paste made from potatoes.

EVYNA.—There is no "correct" rule about it in the present day.

PRIZ.—The only advice we can give you is to advertise for the employment you require.

O. G.—In many parts of Germany the chimneys are swept by Government at stated and definite periods.

AGATHA.—The opal is the only gem which cannot be counterfeited. Its delicate tints cannot be reproduced.

REGULAR READER.—Coal is dearer in South Africa than in any other part of the world; it is cheapest in China.

OSCE.—You cannot join the American Navy anywhere in this country; must either go to United States or to a continental port.

DOUBTFUL.—Whatever is discussed in the newspapers of the day is held as common property and open to unlimited criticism.

DIANA.—The only remedy is to have good materials properly dyed. Velvet or cloth will not come out in ordinary wear.

INQUIRITIVE.—The pertinacity with which blood-stains remain is mainly attributable to the presence of iron in the blood.

HUGHWIRE.—Half a teaspoonful of sugar scattered over a dying fire will brighten it far better than kerosene, and has no element of danger.

N. H.—A burning gas jet is unhealthy in a bedroom because one swallow gives out as much carbonic acid gas as two sleepers.

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—A moderate diet (often of beef-steaks and biscuits), severe exercise, and fresh air form the principal features in the treatment.

SAMMY.—The name of the celebrated person who set out with Bruce's heart to take it to Jerusalem for interment, was Lord James Douglas.

S. B.—Moderate cold is a stimulant, because it drives blood from the surface of the body and induces exercise in order to restore circulation.

FURZE.—The cheeks become pale from fear because the mental emotion diminishes the action of the heart and lungs, and so impedes the circulation.

B. P.—You cannot go into an hotel and insist on being served with refreshment; the hotel-keeper may refuse to supply anyone or everyone, if he thinks fit.

T. J.—If he be the guardian of the child's property, the court may order him to use a part of it, or if another person be the guardian, it can order him to do so.

INTERESTED ONE.—Instances of extreme old age are more common among those who exercise themselves with gardening than in any other employment.

PULVER.—In blacking your kitchen stove better results are reached if the blacking is wet with coffee instead of water.

THINK ONE.—If you think seriously about what you have written advise you to consult with an official of the church in your district.

D. A. D.—Glycerine is not injurious to any part of the face; on the contrary, it use cannot but do good. By itself we do not think it will remove freckles. The distance from Paddington to Oswestry is 191 miles.

TROUBLED ONE.—Your excessive bashfulness is probably the principal cause of the troubles to which you refer. Overcome that and you may soon get rid of your other drawbacks.

E. M.—The Chinese divide the day into twelve parts of two hours each. The Italians reckon twenty-four hours round, instead of two divisions of twelve hours each, as we do.

CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE.—Although the Manchester Ship Canal is only in its infancy as a maritime highway, 3,000 vessels passed through it in the first year since its opening, and of these 501 were foreign vessels bound to Manchester direct.

E. B.—It is a good plan to throw flowers of sulphur on the fire, because the result of the combustion of sulphur is sulphurous acid, a gas in which bodies cannot burn.

CONSTANT READER.—Dynamite is composed of nitro-glycerine and an earth called by the Germans kieselguhr, got by baking in a peculiar oven the remains of a plant found under the ground like coal.

LEWIS.—The arc light is that kind of electric light where the current is conveyed through two carbon points a short distance apart. The light forms an arc in passing from one to another.

IGNORANT.—Idiosyncrasy means a peculiarity of disposition or temperament. The word was originally restricted to medical authors, but has for some time past been introduced into non-professional language.

LAURA.—Russia leather is the skin of the horse or calf tanned with the bark of the birch, which gives it that peculiar smell which is so grateful to the senses, and seems to preserve it from the attacks of insects.

C. H.—Dip the paper in a strong solution of oxalic acid, then in a solution of one part muratic acid and six parts of water; after which bathe well in cold water to remove all trace of acid, and allow to dry slowly.

SYD.—Herat, in Afghanistan, is the city which has been most often destroyed. Fifty-six times have its walls been laid in ruins, and the same number of times have they been erected again.

F. F.—Edward Augustus, Duke of Kent, fourth son of George III. of England, and father of Queen Victoria, died in 1820. He married the widow of the Prince of Leiningen, youngest daughter of the Duke of Saxe-Coburg. Victoria was the only child of this union.

"IS IT STRANGE?"

When the day is slowly dying,
And the stars begin to peep,
While the summer flowers are lying
Bathed in dew and kindly sleep,
By my door I stand and listen
For a dear loved step again;
Is it strange the tears should glisten
When I wait so long in vain?
Is it strange the sob should gather
As a token of my pain?

Day by day dies by without him,
Nearer a message of his love,
Shall I, can I, dare to doubt him,
Once as true as heaven above?
Once so eager I should listen,
Does he treat me with disdain?
Is it strange that tears will glisten
When I ask myself in vain,
"Is he false to me, my lover?
Will he never come again!"

Every hope is quenched in sadness,
Even life grows dark to me,
When a sudden tale of gladness
Comes across the deep blue sea.
Standing in the shadow dreary,
Waiting with a wild unrest,
Is it strange a footstep near me
Tells of him that I love best?
Is it strange I should be weeping
When he clasps me to his breast?

A. L. S.

HARRY.—Slides for magic lanterns are painted with colours worked up in transparent varnish. Mastic and copal varnishes will both answer; though the former is somewhat unmanageable, on account of its property of drying rapidly.

UNHAPPY KITT.—Do not let any ordinary misunderstanding prejudice you against your suitor. Explanations are always in order, and if you possess a forgiving spirit you will be readily reconciled to him, especially if he be truly penitent.

WILKINS MICAWBER.—The term "punch," as applied to a beverage, is derived from the Indian word "punji," or "five," referring to the five ingredients of which it is composed—spirit, water, lemon, spice and sugar. The Punjab, in India, is so named from its being a region with five great rivers.

BENTHAM.—Chants are of three kinds; the monody, sung by one voice; the antiphony, alternately by two; and the choral by all voices. They have grown with the progress of Christianity. St. Paul exhorted the early Christians to chant psalms and canticles, and it is mentioned that they met at break of day to chant their hymns.

FLOES.—You would be incurring a great risk in encouraging the attentions of anyone possessed of a handsome exterior, but lacking the mental qualities which impart to men true manliness, and stamp them as worthy of confidence and devotion. Young girls are too often deceived by a specious appearance, and discover when too late that all is not gold which glistens.

REGINALD.—It seems to be the general opinion that, in sleeping, the right side is the better of the two sides to lie upon for any length of time, as it leaves the action of the heart free from any undue pressure which might occur to it. Especially is the right the better side, it is thought, on first retiring at night, after the last heavy meal of the day. Afterward it may be well to alternate, sleeping on the side found most agreeable, the body being allowed finally to seek its own position.

WILFRED.—"Natural steel" is manufactured; it is an impure and variable kind of steel, procured from cast-iron, or from iron ore. The "best steel" is made from Swedish and Russian bar iron, by a process called cementation.

ROSEMOY.—Common starch, ground to the smoothest powder, is an excellent remedy for chapped hands. After washing the hands, rinse thoroughly in clean water, wipe them, and while they are yet damp rub a pinch of the starch thoroughly over them, covering the whole surface. The rough, scarring skin will be cooled, soothed, and healed.

T. R.—Boil the dock in a soapy lather, to which may be added a tablespoonful, or a little more, according to the quantity you have to cleanse, of paraffin oil. Then rinse well in clean warm water; spread out to dry, and when dry pick over, opening up all matted or lumpy places. Thoroughly wash the case dry, mangle, and remake.

BERTIE.—Boil cauliflower whole, trim the stalks so that the cauliflower will lie flat in an earthen dish with the blossom uppermost, pour over it white sauce enough to moisten it, dust it with cracker-crumbs, pepper and salt, put a few bits of butter over the crumbs, then brown the cauliflower in a quick oven, and serve it in the dish in which it is browned.

ALICE.—Cheese sandwiches may be made in several ways. Omit to butter the bread. Grate old dry cheese; moisten slightly with sweet cream. Place the cheese between two layers of bread and press lightly together. These must be fashioned just before serving. Another way is to cut cream cheese into slices and lay between the bread, or two thin, delicate wafers or plain biscuit.

E. W. G.—We see no real ground for divorce on the part of either party. It seems to us that a little more yielding of one to the other, a greater desire to promote each other's comfort, and a less disputatious spirit, would be all-sufficient to prevent any violent outbreak. Discretion in speech, courtesy in manner, and less self-assertion will greatly aid in enabling man and wife to live on terms of amity, even if love be out of the question.

H. K.—Prepare the oysters as for frying, drop two drops of lemon juice on each oyster, and sprinkle a little celery salt and white pepper over them. Heat a perfectly clean pan cake griddle, drop a bit of butter on it, and as soon as it melts place one of the oysters on it. Proceed in this way, leaving room to turn each over when brown on one side. When ready to turn drop a bit of butter close beside it and turn. These are far superior to ordinary fried oysters, and may be served for luncheon or supper, with celery or other salad.

ANXIOUS PARENT.—Ill-mannered children reflect upon their parents, for observers are very apt to come to the conclusion that if the father or mother, or both together, had instructed their offspring properly they would not have grown up to be a nuisance, as they sometimes are, to all with whom they come in contact. It may be that the parents, generally, err in making the department of their children attractive and free from reproach; but many are met with who are just the reverse of what they should be that it is often made the subject of remark in well-ordered households.

B. D.—The birds get from it the lime which they need for the growth of their bones, and they also whet their beaks on it. This bone, which is in the hinder part of the cuttle-fish, is porous or full of little holes. Its use is not positively known, some writers think it acts as a sort of fender to keep the animal from being injured when coming in contact with things when swimming backward. It has ten arms or legs growing out round the head, two of which are longer than the others. It is described as being able to walk back downward on its arms on the bottom of the sea, though it can swim by means of them and its fins.

KNOWLEDGE HUNTER.—The meaning of the Gaelic word clan is children, and the obedience which clansmen owed to their chief was considered by them rather as the affectionate obedience due by children to a father than as that due by subjects to a ruler. They believed themselves to be all blood relations descended from a common ancestor, of which their chief was the living representative. The clansman who hesitated to save his chief's life at the expense of his own was regarded as a coward who fled from his father's side in the hour of peril. On the other hand, the chief was expected at all times to acknowledge the meanness of his clan as his relation, and to shake hands with him wherever they might happen to meet.

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